

**CARVING UP THE
CONGO, P.13**

**CHELSEA IS NOT
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**FINDING SOLITARY
NEW YORK, P.5**

THE INDYPENDENT

ISSUE #53, JULY 21-AUGUST 10, 2004 • NYC.INDYMEDIA.ORG • A FREE PAPER FOR FREE PEOPLE

**THE
1ST AMENDMENT
IS THE ONLY PERMIT
WE NEED
RNC 2004**

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THE FEAR FACTOR

Hoard food! Fill the tub with water! Duct tape your windows! Check the batteries! Buy radiation pills! *The Anarchists are coming!*

The anarcho-freaks claim to only eat tofu, but sources tell us they're coming for your pets. Watch out for those dreadlocks, they might be hiding a dirty bomb. Two nose rings mean an attack is imminent. Oh God! They might even sit next to you on the subway.

BY A.K. GUPTA

Better lock up your kids; don't leave your apartment. No, wait, leave the city. There could be a sarin gas attack, car bombs, fleets of AIDS-infected vampire bats. It's Armageddon, the Apocalypse, the end of the world! AHHHHHHHHHHH!!

Silly, no? But this is the right-wing shtick. New Yorkers are pissed and for good reason. We *are* being invaded – by a band of crooks and criminals called the Bush administration. In the name of “safety,” our fair city is being locked down and the public terrorized so some right-wing lunatics can exploit the tragedy of September 11 – our tragedy.

The Republicans hate everything about us. To them, New York City is Sodom and Gomorrah. They hate queers, immigrants, intellectuals, artists, bohemians, Democrats, Blacks, Jews, Muslims, women and, well, New Yorkers.

There's swelling anger over Republican extremism, so city officials are spreading lies to confuse New Yorkers.

Does anyone really take seriously the *Daily News* fear-mongering; that there are people crazy enough to douse themselves with gunpowder so as to cause an alert that shuts down the city? This is what Police Commissioner Ray Kelly told the *News*. Kelly says the “instructions” appeared on the internet – but, conveniently, no one can find the posting anywhere.

The Republicans lie about everything. And when you call them on it, they wrap themselves in the flag and label you a traitor. If that doesn't work, they holler: “Orange Alert! Al Qaeda! We're picking up chatter!”

Truth be told, fear is a powerful drug. It dis-

orients the mind, paralyzes the body and reduces all response to base instinct. Fear is the last refuge of the morally and politically bankrupt.

The Bush administration is running scared. The Republicans stole the first election. And people are on to their Diebold-machine-rigging, voter-roll-purging schemes, so this time they just want to cancel the election.

Unnamed officials are warning us about vague plots by unknown elements. We'll see more pictures of scary, dark-skinned, bearded men with names like Johnny Jihad and Saddam bin-Osama.

But fear has power over us only when we let it. We have a choice. We can break through the wall of terror with hope and humor and reason.

It's time to take back our city and our country, to revive our democracy. We need to be in the streets now, talking to people, engaging the public, showing the world that there is a movement of creativity and passion against the fear and terror.

Now is the time to take a stand, before the last of our rights and freedoms are gone.

**What's Going on for
the Republican
National Convention?
Coverage Cont., P.8**



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With autonomous chapters in more than 100 cities throughout the world, the Independent Media Center is an international network of volunteer media activists.

The IMC seeks to create a new media ethic by providing progressive, in-depth and accurate coverage of issues. We are a community-based organization using media to facilitate political and cultural self-representation. We seek to illuminate and analyze issues affecting individuals, communities and ecosystems by providing media tools and space to those seeking to communicate. We espouse open dialogue and placing the means of communication and creativity back in the hands of the people, away from the drive of profit.

The Independent is funded by benefits, subscriptions, donations, grants and ads from organizations and individuals with similar missions.

WHAT CAN I DO TO GET INVOLVED?

The IMC has an open door. You can write for *The Independent*, film events and rallies, self-publish articles to the web, take photos or just help us run the office. As an organization relying entirely on volunteer support, we encourage all forms of participation.

The print team reserves the right to edit articles for length, content and clarity. We welcome your participation in the entire editorial process.

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COMMUNITY CALENDAR



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DIAL UP THE FIRST AMENDMENT

BY IRINA IVANOVA

Go down to the PATH station at Ground Zero on a Tuesday evening and you'll see the usual mob of people milling around talking into their cell phones. Listen closely, however, and you will start hearing some unlikely snippets of conversation. "Congress shall make no law regarding an establishment of religion..."

Soon you'll realize there's more than one person saying this. In fact, the whole crowd is reciting the First Amendment. As 7 p.m. approaches, they draw closer together in the center of the platform and recite louder, in unison, drowning out other conversations. A few minutes after seven, the crowd disperses.

You have just witnessed the First Amendment Mob in action.

Organized by Reverend Billy and the Church of Stop

Shopping (see revbilly.com), and open to anyone wanting to participate, the First Amendment Mob gathers at this PATH station every Tuesday from 6:30 to 7 p.m. to recite the First Amendment.

"Somehow people are allowed to be rude and loud on cell phones in ways that we wouldn't be allowed by ourselves," says Ben Shepard, the leader of the group's July 13 performance. The First Amendment Mob takes advantage of this social convention to raise people's awareness of the First Amendment, which, they all agree, does not receive enough attention.

"The First Amendment is the basic narrative of our democracy," Shepard said. "It rings the Broadway boogie-woogie of our democracy, you might say."

The First Amendment Mob will be performing each Tuesday evening at the Ground Zero PATH station until the Republican National Convention.

TUE JULY 27

7 p.m.
Independent Meetings
The NYC IMC print team meets every Tuesday night. New volunteers welcome.

7 p.m. • \$3-5, sliding scale
Women's Poetry Jam and Open Mike
Bring your poetry, your prose, your songs, and your spoken word. Bluestockings 172 Allen St. F train, 2nd Ave. bluestockings.com

7:30 p.m.
Blacked-Out Media
The NYC IMC video team meets every Tuesday night. New volunteers welcome. Independent Media Center, 34. E 29th St, www.nyc.indymedia.org

8:30 p.m. • free
July Freedom Follies
Monthly pro-peace, anti-war cabaret. HERE Arts Space 145 6th Ave. (btw. Spring and Broome). Take the C/E to Spring St. thawaction.org

WED JULY 28

7 p.m. • Free
The Seven Deadly Spins: Exposing the Lies Behind War Propaganda
A book reading by Mickey Z. Bluestockings, 172 Allen St, www.bluestockings.com

THURS JULY 29

5 p.m.
Still We Rise Meeting
The Still We Rise Coalition represents New York-based organizations led by people living with HIV, those who are or have been homeless, struggling with the welfare

system, or who have experience with the repressive drug laws and the criminal justice system. They will be marching the first day of the RNC, Aug. 30. St. Mark's Church, 2nd Ave. and 10th St, www.stillwerise.org

7 p.m.
noRNC Clearinghouse
The Clearinghouse is a place for organizations, collectives and groups organizing against the RNC to share resources and ideas. Meeting every other Thursday through August 26. Newcomers come at 7; meeting starts at 7:20. St. Mark's Church, 2nd Ave. and 10th St., www.rncnotwelcome.org/clearinghouse.html

FRI JULY 30

7 p.m.
Critical Mass
Reclaim the streets on bikes or blades. The last Friday of every month. Meet at Union Sq. North, www.times-up.org

8 p.m. • \$7
Rooftop Films: Polyflick
Shorts ranging from the ridiculous to the sublime. Old American Can Factory, 232 3rd St., Gowanus, Brooklyn, www.rooftopfilms.com

SAT JULY 31

2 p.m. • Free
PGP/email Security Workshop
A hands-on training in encrypting not only your emails, but even your hard drive. This is essential knowledge for all activists. RSVP: pgptraining@riseup.net. ABC No Rio, 156 Rivington St.

SAT JULY 31 & SUN AUGUST 1

2 p.m.-6 p.m. • Free
THU AUGUST 5 & FRI AUGUST 6
6 p.m.-10 p.m. • Free
Workshop: Effective Action and Safety during the RNC
Two separate, two-day workshops on self-defense and civil disobedience run by The Center for Anti-Violence Education and co-sponsored by the Ruckus Society, the Silvia Rivera Law Project and the Community Church of NY. To register, call 718-788-1775 or e-mail effectiveaction@cae-bklyn.org / Park Slope, Brooklyn, www.cae-bklyn.org

SUN AUGUST 8

5 p.m.
Time's UP! RNC Event Planning (BIKES!)
Time's UP! is planning a series of positive actions during the RNC entirely on bikes. New volunteers welcome. Times UP! 49 E Houston (Between Mott and Mulberry), times-up.org/rnc_2004.php

TUE AUGUST 10

7:30 p.m. • \$6 sugg. donation
Palante, Siempre Palante!
Documentary on the Young Lords and discussion with Iris Morales. Part of the Visual Liberation III Film/Talk Festival. Brecht Foun, 122 W 27th St., www.brechtforum.org

FRI JULY 30 - THU AUGUST 26

March from the DNC to the RNC
258-mile march from Boston to New York organized by Democracy

Uprising! to move beyond electoral politics and to celebrate grassroots activism and community awareness. For more info: www.dnc2rnc.org

To list your event with the *Community Calendar*, call 212.684.8112

MOVIES AT THE INDEPENDENT MEDIA CENTER

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MON JULY 26

8 p.m. • \$5 Donation

Men with Guns

The story of a Central American doctor who makes a trip to the rain forest where some former students of his reside. As the film proceeds, filmmaker John Sayles expands the doctor's journey into an allegory about all countries where men with guns control the daily lives of the people who live there.

MON AUGUST 2

8 p.m. • \$5 Donation

Outfoxed

Examines how Rupert Murdoch's media empire has led a race to the bottom in television news. This film provides an in-depth look at Fox News and the dangers of ever-enlarging corporations taking control of the public's right to know.

ALL QUIET ON THE WATERFRONT

BY BENNETT BAUMER

After being pushed out of New York decades ago, veteran longshoremen tough and Genovese Crime Family wiseguy Frank Barone relocated to Miami to start a new racket — International Longshoreman Association (ILA) Local 1922. All went well for the aging mobster until 2001 when Feds nabbed him again. However, this time Barone turned state's witness and sang a canary's song about his old mafia pals.

Barone's testimony led to the June 29 arrest of Miami Local 1922's president Arthur Coffey on extortion and mail fraud charges. Barone also fingered New Jersey Local 1235 President Al Cernadas as a mob associate in the Genovese member's racketeering trial last year.

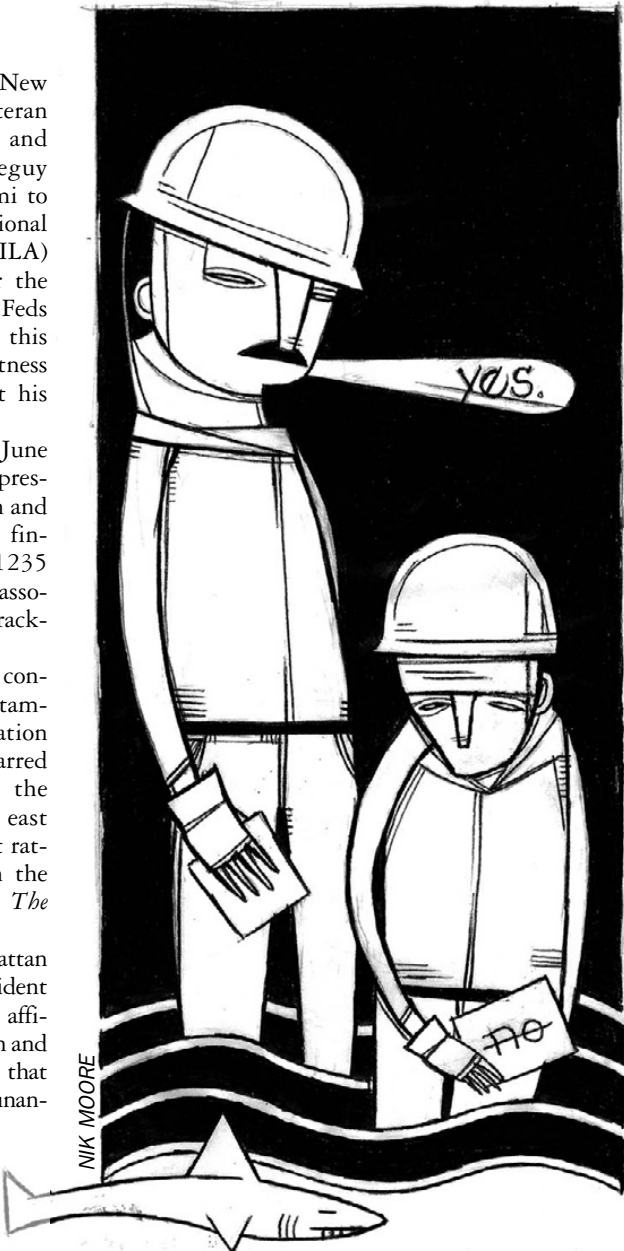
Rank-and-file longshoremen contend that more than just ballot tampering occurred in the ratification vote and say the election was marred by irregularities throughout the 15,000-member union. The east coast ILA held a master contract ratification election up and down the seaboard on June 8. (See *The Independent*, issue #51.)

A complaint filed in Manhattan federal court on July 14 by dissident longshoremen contains multiple affidavits charging voter intimidation and discrimination, and allegations that some locals held the election at unannounced and inconvenient hours.

"A complaint is being filed on the grounds that a number of locals were discriminated against and their votes didn't count. There were also people intimidated in New Jersey," said Susan Jennik, the lawyer for the rank and file dissidents.

After much prodding, the ILA released its election results weeks after the election: 13 of 94 locals reported that no one voted. Some of these locals' tallies were discounted completely because local officials did not conduct the vote between the approved hours of 6 a.m. - 6 p.m. There was no third party supervision of the troubled union's contract vote and the complaint wants a re-vote conducted by the American Arbitration Association.

In a letter to ILA International President John Bowers dated June



28, "concerned rank and file ILA members" wrote that some members in Newark Local 1235 were told to vote "yes." Others who voted "no" had their ballots taken from them. When union members showed up to observe the vote tally, Newark President Cernadas told them to "get the fuck out of here."

"We went in to try to witness the count and he [Cernadas] was pretty belligerent. He tried to throw us out," commented a New Jersey longshoreman who asked not to be identified.

In Fort Lauderdale, Florida, at Local 1526, the Secretary-Treasure Darryl Mike D. Payne watched scores of members leave a long union meeting before they could vote on the contract.

Payne says he and 1526 President Lewis Tunnage have had running differences. "People were under the assumption that Tunnage got permission to have the election at a regular meeting... He made the statement that he got permission because I said we were filing grievances about the contract ratification," said Payne.

Though Local 1526 held its election outside of designated hours, its votes were not disqualified like other locals that did the same. A majority of 1526 members voted for the contract, which many members including Payne call a "sell-out."

When contacted, Tunnage said he "had no hidden agenda" but refused to discuss "internal union issues."

The silence is spreading. ILA spokesman Jim McNamara refused to address the rank-and-file complaint. "If it's about the election it will be an internal matter and we will not have comment," he said.

Down but not out in Miami, Local 1922 President Arthur Coffey is still

on the job after being charged with steering longshoremen pension and benefits contracts, and pier jobs to mob associates. Incidentally, Coffey is also an international official. Indicted in 2003 on a kick-back for hire scheme, former Bayonne Local 1588 President John Timpanaro is out of office but still works on Jersey piers. According to Local 1588 sources, members reportedly had to pay upwards of \$15,000 to get the best jobs the local provided. Currently, there are rumors swirling around the ILA that there's an impending federal indictment of the international that could place the entire union under trusteeship.

'SCREW U'

Labor Board Revokes Grad Students' Right to Unionize

BY PHYLLIS ECKHAUS

In a blow to tens of thousands of graduate students working at private universities across the country, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) recently revoked their right to unionize.

In a ruling issued July 15, the NLRB's Republican majority claims that graduate assistants have an "educational," not "economic" relationship to the university.

The 3-2 split decision is a major setback for organizing efforts underway at Brown, Columbia, Tufts and the University of Pennsylvania. These institutions have resisted recognizing their graduate student unions, counting on the Bush NLRB to reverse a Clinton-era ruling recognizing New York University graduate assistants as employees protected by federal labor law. NYU is currently the only private university in the country to have a contract with its graduate assistants.

Michael Palm, a leader of NYU's Graduate Student Organizing Committee (GSOC), condemned the new ruling as "blatantly political and partisan."

Palm notes that before the contract, graduate assistants typically made about \$11,000 a year without benefits or protections. Some worked as long as 40 hours a week and ran personal errands for faculty, "powerless to resist because their boss was also their academic advisor, someone who has significant power over their professional future."

The NYU contract pays graduate assistants a minimum of \$18,000 a year, limits their hours and provides health insurance. GSOC member Susan Alexander, a graduate assistant in the history department, says that if NYU didn't provide health insurance "graduate school wouldn't be an option" as the pills she takes to counter migraines would cost her \$20 a pop.

Maida Rosenstein, president of UAW Local 2110, which represents 30 shops, including graduate assistants at Columbia and NYU, describes the NLRB decision as "disgusting but not surprising." She says the ruling will hamper but not halt campus organizing. "Now, in order to organize, we have to put direct pressure on the university."

The more than 1,600 members of Columbia's Graduate Student Employees Union (GSEU) went on a month-long strike this spring in an unsuccessful effort to force the university to the bargaining table. GSEU will host a national conference of graduate student unions from July 23-25. Rosenstein says the conference agenda remains the same, although "now that we have the decision we can talk very specifically."

She observes that graduate student unions have "impact beyond numbers" on the overall labor movement. Campus organizing efforts are crucial to movement's future, she says, galvanizing "highly educated, younger workers who will spend their lives teaching others."

Rosenstein hopes the decision will not affect NYU, where the university's contract with GSOC is set to expire in August 2005. She says she expects NYU to "bargain in good faith," adding "we're not going to let them off the hook."

Patrick McCreery, a founder of NYU's GSOC who is now teaching as an adjunct, puts the situation in perspective. "There's a lot of pressure on NYU not to try to bust this union. Graduate students still have the option of striking. You hope you have the support of a large and vocal undergraduate student body."

NYU undergraduates pay up to \$40,000 a year to the university, McCreery observes, and the cash flow could be disrupted by a strike.

McCreery disputes the NLRB assertion that graduate student unions undermine educational excellence. NYU's contract, he contends, makes it "more competitive" among graduate schools, attracting higher caliber students. "No one wants to go \$100,000 into debt and not have health insurance if they can avoid it."

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INTERVIEW



Left: Mural of Celia Cruz.

Above: De La Vega painting outside his gallery on the corner of 103rd and Lexington.

PHOTOS: IRINA IVANOVA

AESTHETIC OFFENSE

De La Vega: "I'd Turn the Whole System Around"

BY IRINA IVANOVA

You've probably seen James De La Vega's work whether you know it or not. It's inscribed on sidewalks and walls all over Manhattan: a biblical scene, two estranged goldfish, or a simple phrase like "You can sell your soul and not even know it." It's words like these that have made him well-loved in his neighborhood of East Harlem and inspired a devoted following on the internet.

De La Vega may be taking a break from painting, as he currently faces jail time for a mural painted on a Bronx warehouse in July 2003. I recently spoke with him at his gallery in Spanish Harlem. It's a small, one-room shop chock-full of paintings, postcards, clothing and children's books.

There's a painting of Saddam Hussein on trial. The walls are covered with aphorisms: "Try going a whole day without looking in a mirror," and "Keep a watchful eye on yourself. The things you do your children see." The most abundant, repeated on t-shirts and baseball caps, is the by-now famous "Become your dream."

"I don't really consider myself a graffiti writer," he tells me, "but I respect the people that do it. Graffiti's an important part of the streets; I know a lot of kids who grew up on that stuff." He talks to me while painting a portrait of a friend, working quickly with cans of spray paint. For a controversial artist and a celebrity, De La Vega is surprisingly down-to-earth, joking around with me and Manny, the friend being painted. "I definitely prefer to work on the streets," he says; "there's more of an element of surprise."

"If I had a particular neighborhood I might be conscious of people who walk through that neighborhood. I like the idea of people mysteriously bumping into stuff on the sidewalk, but I can't even do that

anymore." He pauses briefly. "Well, I could, but I risk going to jail."

When I mention his popularity, he seems surprised: "I have more fans now that I'm considered a criminal?"

I ask him what motivates his art. "A desire to make people rethink the world around them. Art was the only thing that made me feel alive," he adds.

De La Vega's art is deeply rooted in his neighborhood of Spanish Harlem, and it shows. Several of his murals, including a large one of Celia Cruz, are visible from this corner alone, unmolested by other graffiti over the years. People stop by to say hello every few minutes, and hang around to watch — whether this is testimony to De La Vega's compelling art, or his familiarity with everyone in the neighborhood, I'm not sure.

"You almost have to be a part of the experiences that are going on right here to understand them," he says about his aphorisms. "They're like lessons." Several displayed in his shop — "The rich control the destiny of the poor, but an intelligent man controls his own" — make that clear.

However, he says, "I don't view my work as political, but I understand that it does have political content."

Indeed, the unifying theme in his art, allowing him to be simultaneously controversial and non-political, is exploring life rather than making statements about it; encouraging alternate ways of being without openly advocating any. De La Vega's words echo his art — he refrains from passing judgment, preferring instead to talk about things that attract him. On his painting of Saddam: "I find his face interesting, and that he reinvented himself for his trial — he toned down his beard, he had a very professor-like look. He was talking down to the judge."

I ask what artists influence him, and the answer could not be more unexpected: "Lately I've been into Oscar Wilde. I

find it interesting how this guy was sent to prison for being gay."

When asked what he would change about the world, he gives a well-thought-out if playful answer. "I'd twist the game around. I'd make Bloomberg a poor man. I'd make Manny mayor. I'd make the police prisoners, and turn the whole system around."

"I wouldn't send Martha Stewart to prison," he says, after a pause. "I'd strip her of her money and set her up in Harlem or Spanish Harlem and show people how to run their own businesses."

What does he want out of life?

"To convince people that we don't always have to feel so powerless. I think we're all dependent on the system in some way; that's a given. But people need to see more examples of people really making it, happier people who are really independent, not dependent on the system."

This reminds me of his impending trial, which he has declined to discuss, so I ask where he sees himself in the future.

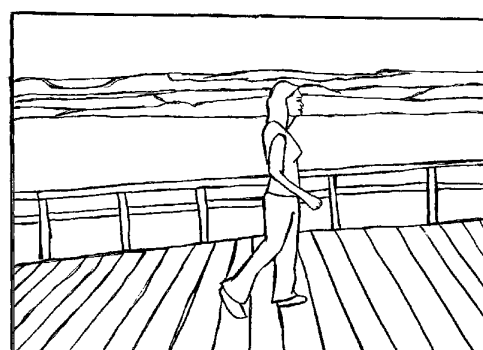
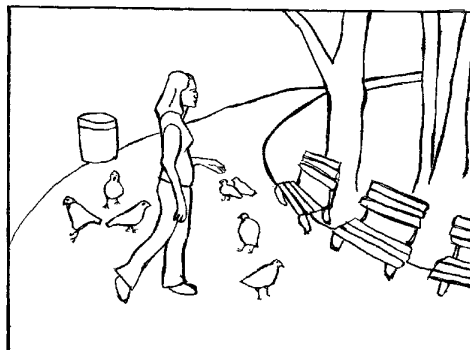
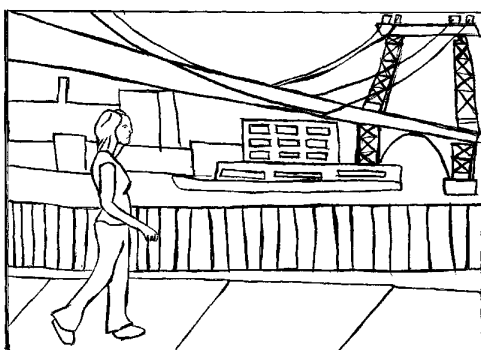
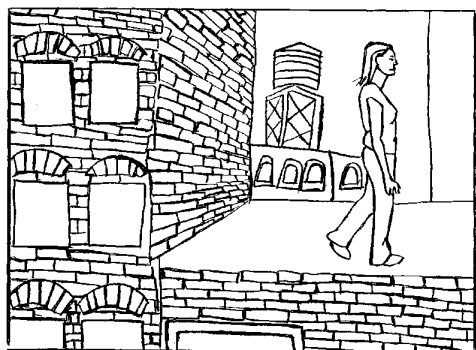
"I don't see myself in ten years. I can only focus on now. The idea of focusing on tomorrow is too much for me."

DOING TIME FOR ART

On June 10, 2004, James De La Vega was convicted on three Class B misdemeanors for painting on the side of a warehouse in the Bronx. The convictions could mean up to 6 months in jail.

The painting, a large fish jumping from a fishbowl into a glass, is technically graffiti, and led to the conviction of "marking a wall with the intent to damage." De La Vega claims his intent was never to damage the wall, however, but simply to provoke thought. Since his request to change the wording of the case, from "graffiti" to "graffiti art," was denied, he continues to plead innocence. De La Vega will be sentenced on July 29 at Bronx Criminal Court.

GETTING LOST IN THE CROWD



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The crowds, the chaos, the cacophony – that’s what draws many people to Gotham City. But sometimes you need to get away from it all. Even in New York you can find solitude in public; you just need to know where and when to look for it.

BY A.K. GUPTA

Some of the most peaceful spots in the city can be found on rooftops. Maybe you can sneak onto your roof at work; the more intrepid might need to employ the fire escape. Check out your roof at home or in a friend’s building – just scout out the area first for motion alarms, security cameras and self-locking doors.

There’s a world of solitude on the tar beach. Sure, you can hear the sirens, boom boxes and street chatter. But it’s like being out West – there’s big sky, an endless vista of rooftops instead of hills and thousands of twinkling office lights at night. You can’t see anyone, and there’s usually a breeze blowing, a welcome relief in the summer. I know people who practically spend their whole summer on rooftops, eating and sleeping and canoodling under a few dozen pale stars. You can even see the occasional shooting star.

Speaking of fire escapes, they are a great venue for people watching. No one notices

you up there, unless you’re throwing eggs at the tourists below. You can spend hours watching the street life in your own bubble.

Public parks are another great option for solitude. Of course, if you go into Central Park or Prospect Park on a warm Sunday afternoon, it’s you and 50,000 of your closest friends. Even if you bushwhack in the thickets, someone else is likely there doing god knows what.

Find the times when the parks are empty – and that’s at night. If you’ve never been in a park at night, it can be intimidating. So safety comes first. Dress down, bring a flashlight and cell phone, and go with a couple of other people. Okay, you’re not really alone, but there’s nothing like traversing the urban woodscape at night. A friend and I recently explored Kissena Park in Queens at 2 a.m. There were a few other people on the paths and lounging around the lake, but once we plunged into the heart of the darkness we were completely alone – no people, no street noise.

The East River Park is great for late-

night adventurers, as are the paths under the East River bridges and around the tip of Manhattan. If you’re an avid bicyclist, you’re even better prepared. My introduction to parks after dark was through moonlight rides in Central Park. A few dozen of us would tear across the trails and paths in pitch black. The routes had all been scouted. Occasionally, a cop would chance upon us, but we were either too many or too fast for them to bother with.

The walkways on bridges are virtually deserted in the middle of the night with picture-perfect views of the skyline. Again, bring a friend or two along.

You can also try walking around during a rainy day. A summer shower clears almost everyone off the bike paths around Manhattan.

Beaches are ideal for a nighttime stroll or dip. Check out Coney Island or Brighton Beach, especially late on a weeknight. Sometimes you’ll see a loner walking across the beach, but they tend to leave you alone. Just use your street sense.

If you’re adventurous, check out the Far Rockaways. In the brush you can find World War II-era concrete bunkers that are now completely abandoned except for swarms of mosquitoes. Bring along repellent, good flashlights and waterproof boots. The bunkers are usually knee-deep in water, and ideal for spelunkers. Be warned: you can get lost in the maze of

unmarked tunnels.

Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge is a real gem. There’s an amazing variety of birds, but lots of birdwatchers, too. If you hike around and keep your eyes open, you can find unmarked trails that lead to the marshlands. You can sit there for hours undisturbed by anyone, save jumbo jets landing and taking off at JFK. The power of the mechanized birds offers a fascinating contrast to the feathered variety.

There are certain principles to finding the quiet spots. The further you travel to the fringes, the less people there are. There are many spots along the Brooklyn shoreline that are ideal for being alone.

Think off-season. During the winter, take a ride down to any beach. A few hardy souls stroll the boardwalks, but there are even less on the beach. Dress warmly because the ocean wind makes it colder.

The next time a blizzard hits, bundle up and go for a hike in the streets. The traffic is minimal, noise is muffled and everyone else is huddling indoors.

The further north you go in Manhattan, the fewer people. Just south of the George Washington Bridge I once came across a handful of people playing cards around a small campfire on the banks of the Hudson River.

Past the GW Bridge is The Cloisters, which offer a serene, medieval setting on rainy weekdays.

PROSPECT PARK



SPIRITS GATHER

Every Sunday afternoon crowds gather at Drummer’s Grove, near Ocean and Parkside, for the hottest drum circle in the city. By evening, Haitian drummers join the crowd and parade through the park. And it’s totally free. Veggie-friendly food stalls offer West Indian fare and merchants sell Afrocentric wares.

PHOTOS: RINE SIEGAL

CRITICAL MASS



FREE THE BIKES!

On July 9, 60 cyclists banded together to ride in Brooklyn’s first Critical Mass. Already a tradition in the city, Critical Mass is a community ride that reclaims streets from cars. Rides will leave every second Friday from Grand Army Plaza.

PHOTOS: RYAN DUNSMUIR

NEWS IN BRIEF

FAROUK ABDEL-MUHTI, PALISTINIAN MILITANT, DIES

Longtime Palestinian independence activist Farouk Abdel-Muhti died of a heart attack July 21. He was 56. Muhti was released from jail in April after being held without charges for almost two years by U.S. immigration officials. Abdel-Muhti was incarcerated in the spring of 2002, weeks after he began doing broadcasts on WBAI-FM that criticized the Israeli invasion of the West Bank. For more, see lostorliberty.org

CRUEL OR UNUSUAL? SHIT HITS THE FLOOR AT RIKERS

According to *Newsday*, a botched water shutoff at Rikers Island last August resulted in over 48 hours of sewage-covered cell floors. The problem began when plumbers failed to fully close water valves after a routine water shutoff. The next morning, the 196 inmates on affected cellblocks began to complain about low water pressure. Even as the complaints began to include sewage overflows and lack of drinking water, prison officials failed to fix the problem. The vomit-inducing stench led to a standoff between prison inmates and correctional officers which culminated during the third night of the crisis when prisoners barricaded their cells with tables and chairs, refusing to lock in, prompting officials to call in heavily armored Emergency Service Unit teams.

Several inmates claim to have been beaten during the faceoff but the prison denies this, though nine inmates have filed complaints and the jail's warden, who was gone for the weekend, has been demoted four grades.

ASIAN-AMERICANS FACE VOTING DISCRIMINATION

Numerous obstacles were placed in the way of Asian-Americans who wished to vote in the 2003 N.Y. city elections, according to a recent report by the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund. Voters were often improperly asked for identification, poll workers were "rude" and "hostile," ballots were left untranslated in several locations and about two out of three interpreters failed to show up.

TRICKS ARE FOR REPUBLICANS

Sex workers are flying in from all over the world to attend to the attendees of the Republican National Convention, says the *NY Daily News*. Some escort agencies are doubling their staffs for the week of the convention, temporarily employing workers from as far away as Seattle, California and London.

Tracy Quan, author of the memoir *Diary of a Manhattan Call Girl*, is worried that cops will crack down on the less upscale sex workers. "Whenever there's a big political convention...street girls are going to be hassled, arrested and treated like criminals...all in the name of 'cleaning up our city' for these people from out of town."

CHALLENGE TO FELON VOTING BAN DISMISSED

Hayden vs. Pataki, a suit against the disenfranchising of convicted felons, was thrown out by the US District Court for the Southern District in New York. The suit argued that the New York State laws that deny the vote to felons in prison or on parole were designed to deny the vote to African-Americans and thus violated the constitution. 87 percent of felons denied the right to vote are Black or Latino.



BY F. TIMOTHY MARTIN

More than 2,000 mostly black-clad hackers, crackers, phreakers and wannabes converged in the Hotel Pennsylvania in Manhattan on June 9-11 for the fifth Hackers on Planet Earth (HOPE) conference. Held every two years by 2600, a quarterly magazine that covers hacking issues, the event is the largest of its kind in North America.

"Propaganda" was this year's theme. Conference goers wore black armbands and crowded discussion halls draped in tapestries emblazoned with the event's logo of a white fist. Behind the speaker's podium hung a giant poster of a Hitleresque face accompanied by the text "Big Brother is Watching You," courtesy of the creators of a new comic book inspired by George Orwell's prophetic novel, *1984*.

The scene brought to mind a Hitler Youth rally attended by hundreds of extras from a sci-fi goth thriller, but the underlying message was Orwellian. As a result, in addition to discussion panels on hacking and technology, there were many others dedicated to political protest, evading surveillance, and civil liberties.

Given the rising number of legal and governmental actions taken against hackers, the conference had an understandably somber tone.

"The Digital Millennium Copyright Act, Patriot Act and other related legislation and trends affecting tech make it impossible to do the sort of things people once did without getting thrown in jail," says Mike Castleman, a conference organizer. "Politics has forced itself upon hackers."

NEW YORK SUMMER



Clockwise from above: Arab-American Street Festival, North African Street Festival, Haitian human rights rally, UFPJ march at City Hall for Republican Convention protest permit.



EDGAR MATA



IRINA IVANOVA

eLIBERTY

Hackers Converge for Fifth World Gathering

Organizers and speakers worked to dispel the convictions of some that hackers' intentions are less often benign than criminal.

"Hacking is often just some kid trying to be funny," said Apple computers co-founder Steve Wozniak. "We're only a threat to those who want to innovate with money rather than with brains. Looking around this room you can tell we're not motivated by money, and that scares some people."

Wosniak and punk rock icon Jello Biafra gave keynote addresses on Saturday and Sunday. But perhaps the most anticipated event was the first-ever appearance of Kevin Mitnick, once considered the world's most notorious hacker. The first HOPE began as an appeal for Mitnick, who was held for more than four years without bail, accused of being able to launch a nuclear Armageddon by whistling into a telephone.

Mitnick gave the opening day keynote address to a packed crowd braving an air conditioning failure in sweltering temperatures. He began by relating an hour's worth of humorous anecdotes depicting his life as a prankster, hacker and fugitive before turning toward a more serious message.

"I want to encourage you all not to follow in my footsteps," he said. "Hackers should hack in a way that's socially productive." Mitnick advocated that attendees consider "hacking for hire" and using their skills to strengthen the security of corporations and government. Mitnick currently serves as a corporate security consultant.

While the message may have been buzz kill for some, there were plenty of other voices to satisfy diverging interests. Films were screened continuously in a 24-hour movie room, and there was a lock-picking workshop held each day, a wireless network for attendees to work online, and three tracks of panels running throughout the event.

"Where else can you get a panel on the Republican National Convention followed by cryptography, then a discussion on early computing?" asked Castleman. "The diversity of topics this weekend is very rare."



FREDASKEW.COM



PHOTOS: IAN WISHNIA

Hassan, a deli clerk, worries that the Republican National Convention will effectively shut down his business.

DON'T YOU BE MY NEIGHBOR

Chelsea, the neighborhood closest to the Republican Convention, is definitely not Bush country.

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

On New York's electoral map, both the Penn South Houses, a nonprofit co-op dominated by elderly working-class Jews, and the Elliott-Chelsea projects across Ninth Avenue, stand out as several shades more Democratic than the rest of lower Manhattan. Below 23rd Street, Eighth Avenue is second only to Christopher Street as the main drag of gay New York.

Six weeks before the Republican National Convention opens at Madison Square Garden, the strongest sentiment in the neighborhood seems to be a wish that it would happen somewhere else.

"I'm miserable. Can you imagine what's going to happen?" asks a white-haired woman sitting behind her walker on a bench in Penn South, the six blocks of high-rises that line Eighth Avenue a few streets south of the Garden. "I'm a Democrat, so what do I want with the Republicans?"

"Send 'em back where they came from."

"Chaos!" exclaims a black woman with close-cropped gray hair waiting at the counter of a restaurant just across the street from the Garden. "Why couldn't they have it somewhere else?"

"People are very, very angry about the Bush agenda," says Estelle Katz of Chelsea for Peace, based on her experiences tabling in the neighborhood. "There are only a few people who say anything pro-Bush."

The antipathy to Bush doesn't necessarily translate into sympathy for the protesters, though. "Who wants Bush? I don't want Bush!" exclaims a Penn South resident, but she dismisses *The Independent* as "that communist paper." Others worry that protesters will try to sleep on the complex's lawns. In a nearby building, a goateed Puerto Rican man frets that "some blowhard screaming all night" will keep him and his family awake.

Penn South management has already warned co-op members "if at all possible, to stay inside" during the convention.

But many people seem to lump the hassles of a police state together with a vague idea of the demonstrations as "trouble."

"It's frightening," says a woman in her sixties, the youngest-looking one on the benches. "So many people expressing their hostility, us having to carry photo ID." Like the other women on the benches, she doesn't want to give her name.

Still, a random sample of Saturday-afternoon pedestrians in the area — people in the impromptu flea market of jewelry and old videocassettes outside Elliott-Chelsea; the aged bubbes sharing Penn South

benches with their Jamaican health-care aides; and passers-by outside the Big Cup coffeehouse on Eighth Avenue, a popular coffee spot for the kind of men George Bush doesn't want to get married — finds more people who wish Bush dead than ones who say they'll vote for him.

"Bush should be tried for treason and executed," explodes a sixtyish white man standing outside Elliott-Chelsea. He took power under "false pretenses," the man sputters, and the Republicans coming to New York is "terrible and a disgrace."

"Send 'em back where they came from," rages Calvin, a fortyish, shaven-headed black man selling used jeans on Ninth Avenue. "The economy is messed up. I've been looking for a job for eight months. I've never been out of work for eight months in twenty-five years. It's disgusting." However, he is not going to join the protests. "I'm not going anywhere near there," he says. "You might get arrested for walking on the wrong block."

About the most positive sentiment anyone musters about the convention comes from Mark, a 51-year-old Clinton resident, who opines that "it's wonderful to bring all that money to town." He pauses. "I plan to be out of town that week." The protesters, he adds, should be allowed inside the Garden.

The Republicans should "absolutely not" come to the neighborhood, says David, a thirtyish Asian-American standing outside the Big Cup. He asks if any of the protests will be "gay-affiliated."

Many neighborhood residents, however, have minimal knowledge of what is happening with the convention and the protests.

"There hasn't been much reaction," says Gloria Sukenick, a Penn South resident and longtime housing activist. "All I've heard is mild irritation. People don't want to be inconvenienced." She herself, like several other neighborhood activists, has been focused mainly on trying to stop Mayor Bloomberg's plans to pack Chelsea and Clinton with office towers, luxury high-rises and a new stadium.



"It's wonderful to bring all that money to town..."

I plan to be out of town that week."

"The younger folks are the ones who are really coming out. The older folks are tired, they've struggled, and a lot of them are not well," says Estelle Katz. "Most people are opposing the war now, but they haven't woken up to that their voting rights might be taken away. There are a lot of spokes to the wheel."

And in a Penn South laundry room one night, a middle-aged man wonders what his rights are. "If the FBI comes to my door," he asks, "can I tell them to go fuck themselves?"

BUSH BAD FOR BUSINESS

BY STEVEN WISHNIA

One block away from Madison Square Garden, 30th St. Guitars is a musician's cornucopia. One wall is completely covered with vintage electric guitars, four long rows of black Telecasters and cherry-sunburst Les Pauls. The upstairs room is devoted to basses and acoustic guitars with a side area displays exotica like electric sitars.

But store worker Ned Brewster isn't looking forward to next month, when much of the neighborhood will be closed down for the RNC.

"It's gonna suck, man," Brewster gripes. The block is supposed to be open during the convention, he says, but they don't know if that will mean to cars, to pedestrians only, or if it will be put "on lockdown," closed to all those without ID.

Even if customers can get to the store, how many people will come out to buy a \$1,400 B.B. King-style semi-hollowbody, if they have to risk walking through a riot to get it home?

Across the street, 251 West 30th St. is the heart of the city's rehearsal studio world, the elevator full of musicians schlepping guitars, basses, and drumstick bags. Denise, manager of *The Studio*, says she thinks they will be okay, but "we'll have to wait and see." She hasn't yet heard if the street will be open. "If they still have gigs, they have to rehearse," she explains, "but if it becomes too difficult, they'll stay away."

People in the businesses on Eighth Ave. between 30th and 31st streets, the block designated as the miniscule official "protest area," are more confused. Few immigrants have heard about who and what will be allowed on the block. "We don't have the schedule yet," says Hassan, a deli clerk. "Looks like it's gonna be no nothing."

"Should not be busy," says Karim, an Indian immigrant behind the cash register in the deli across the street. "Nobody can come in. Everybody has to show ID. And too many cops outside."

The delis could conceivably benefit from the protests, though, as people stuck on the block will get hungry and thirsty.

But the Midtown Home Center hardware store will probably close for the week. "My business is different. Not eating or drinking," says Badr, the Yemen-born manager. "If people can't walk, we're going to have to close."

Workers at D'Aiuto's Bakery, which advertises Baby Watson cheesecakes, disagree. "We're gonna make money," says Eldridge, an elderly man seated at an adding machine in the back.

"It's gonna be lousy. My boss gonna lose everything," responds Lisa, the middle-aged European immigrant behind the counter. "Ah, she's a Democrat," Eldridge laughs. "Everything's gonna be great. We like Republicans."


Jeff West, owner of Ultra Sound, a 21-room rehearsal complex that fills three floors of 251 West 30th St., has been following the situation closely, talking to police since May. They have told him the block will be open, and he plans to give musicians who book time during the convention passes printed on studio letterhead in case they need to get through police checkpoints. But he worries because the convention comes right before Labor Day — one of the slowest weekends of the year in the rehearsal business.

"That's going to kill us," says West, once the drummer for the legendary glam-rockers Johnny Thunders and Walter Lure. "We're going to try, but if musicians don't want to be here, we can give all the passes we want and there's nothing I can do. In the best-case scenario, it's going to be terrible."

The convention will probably bring a lot of money into New York, he adds, but "little businesses like us, we're going to take a beating."


Chronicle
of a
CONVENTION

THE 2000 RNC, PHILADELPHIA



- **Prior to the convention, police warn of the specter of Seattle-style protests.** “Seeking to avoid a repeat of the looting and rioting that marred global trade protests in Seattle last year, police say they’re fully prepared to use any means necessary to ensure order,” writes *Philadelphia Daily News* on July 27, 2000.
- **Even before the protests begin, police raid a puppet warehouse on dubious charges.** “Outside the puppet studio yesterday afternoon, TV news vans whined, passers-by gawked and GOP protesters were perturbed after city officials closed it – and the entire seven-story, brick building housing it. City inspectors cited ‘a dozen or so’ violations of fire and building codes,” reported the *Daily News*.
- **The threat of lizard-wielding anarchists leads to the arrest of a man driving a red bus on Aug. 1.** “Police... seized a red school bus containing about 2,000 iguanas, white mice, exotic snakes, crickets, desert toads and lizards fearing the animals would be let loose during protests.” chronicles the *Philadelphia Inquirer*. “Police had begun searching for the bus after receiving a tip that a similar bus had been spotted last year at the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle.”
- **Once the dust settles, the Philadelphia media recoils in stunned embarrassment.** In a lengthy editorial, the *Daily News* writes on July 30, 2001 that “a series of civil rights lawsuits (some already filed, others in the works) offer evidence that the image Philadelphia presented to the world last summer was – at least in part – a charade ... Many charges were dropped for lack of evidence; others failed to impress judges or juries (a minuscule number of protesters were found guilty of anything). But by the time the prosecutions fell apart, the spotlight had moved elsewhere. Very convenient – and very disturbing to anyone who thinks the 4th, 5th, 8th and 14th amendments to the Constitution ought to mean something in the city where it was written.”

-Chris Anderson



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THE INDEPENDENT

PHOTOS: DAIN JAY

media barons try to spook public, again

SPIN CYCLE

By IMC STAFF

On the afternoon of Aug. 1, 2000, Marc Miclette was pulled over by Philadelphia police while making a delivery to a pet store. He was driving a bright red school bus crammed with 2,000 iguanas, white mice, exotic snakes, crickets, desert toads and lizards. The police ordered Miclette out at gunpoint and confiscated his bus and his cargo. The city had been on edge for weeks with media reports of “anarchist” protesters planning to rampage through the city during that year’s Republican National Convention (RNC).

Would a poisonous toad be the protesters’ weapon of choice? With the demonstrations under way, the police weren’t taking any chances. A puppet-making warehouse was “pre-emptively” raided and shut down for various “building code violations,” and more than 400 people were arrested during convention week itself.

The local press responded with applause. “Philidelphia police have shown how to do it right,” wrote the Aug. 3, 2000 *Philadelphia Inquirer*. “Police have kept control of the city by not losing control of themselves.”

Unfortunately for both the protesters and the city of Philadelphia, nearly all of the police successes turned out to be overreactions. Months after the Philadelphia confab ended, barely a half-dozen of the hundreds of arrestees had been convicted – none on felony charges. Exasperated city judges dismissed dozens of cases at a time. As for Marc Miclette and his bus full of poisonous reptiles, he actually did work for a local pet store. Miclette was “a guy in the wrong place at the wrong time,” Sgt. Earl Schoen sheepishly admitted to the press. “It’s unfortunate he was caught up and associated with the RNC protests.”

Expect more RNC-related media hysteria this summer, says Chris Anderson, author of “Getting Used How the Mainstream Media Helps Create a Climate of Fear and Repression During Political Protests.” Anderson, a PhD candidate at the Columbia School of Journalism (and reporter for *The Independent*) studied hundreds of newspaper articles over the past five years and found a consistent pattern of what he terms

“media malpractice” whenever citizens come together in large numbers exercise their right to disagree with the government.

The report documents how the media consistently repeat unsubstantiated police claims about violent troublemakers before protests began. Furthermore, once arrests occur, newspapers parrot police statements about the reasons for detention, reasons that often turn out to be either exaggerated or false.

“Many of these same journalists angrily denounced their own manipulation once the protests ended,” says Anderson. “What we see in the hundreds of articles we examined is a shoddy form of journalism that threatens the civil liberties and safety of ordinary Americans who choose to exercise their right to disagree with their government.”

Will the New York media learn from the past? Early signs are not encouraging. More than a month before this summer’s convention, city residents needn’t look far for the latest example of pre-protest hysteria. Readers of the July 12 *New York Daily News* were greeted by a screaming front-page headline (“Anarchy Threat to the City: Cops fear hard-core lunatics plotting convention chaos”) warning them away from protests against the Republican National Convention. The “exclusive” story inside about how “sneaky” protesters were looking to fool bomb-sniffing police dogs turned out to be based on an alleged internet post, with no web site ever given. Despite the lack of sourcing and balance, dozens of radio stations and cable TV outlets repeated the *Daily News* story, while quotes about rifle-range prowling anarchists spread across the web.

In the end, Anderson admits that it will take unusual restraint on the part of the press to avoid the mistakes of the past. “Whether they’re overtly embracing a police agenda or are simply getting led around by the nose,” he concludes, “it seems unlikely that the media gatekeepers will be able to resist the kind of drama that comes from hyping a violent, bandana-wearing threat – even if that threat doesn’t actually exist.”

To see Chris Anderson’s report, go to <http://nyc.indymedia.org/newswire/display/97252/index.php>

FRI AUGUST 20 –
SUN AUGUST 22

Life After Capitalism
Conference

Hunter Assembly Hall
(695 Park Ave) and CUNY
Grad Center 365 5th Ave
www.lifeaftercapitalism.org

Tuesday August 24

RNC Protest
Party Kickoff

Webster Hall, 125 E.
11th Street
www.howlfestival.org

Thursday August 26

Democracy Uprising –
DNC2RNC caravan
arrives in New York
www.dnc2rnc.org

Friday August 27

Immigrant Workers
Day of Action and
Speak Out; all day

Critical Mass Bike Ride
Meeting point TBA
www.times-up.org

Saturday August 28

Books Not Bombs
Convergence;
all day

St Mark’s Church, 131
E. 10th St.
www.nyspc.net

Sunday August 29

United For Peace and
Justice march and rally
in Manhattan
www.unitedforpeace.org/article.php?id=1810

Monday August 30

Still We Rise and the
Hip-Hop Summit Action

Network jointly staging
a rally in Times Square
www.stillwerise.org and
www.hsan.org

Kensington Welfare
Rights Union presents a
March for Our Lives; 4 pm
Start: United Nations,
end: Madison Square
Garden
www.kwru.org

Tuesday August 31

A day of direct action
outside the police pens

Wednesday
September 1

New York City Central
Labor Council hosts
massive afternoon rally
on West Side

“Unemployment Line”
earlier the same day

Consult the following websites for
detailed information on the RNC:

- www.counterconvention.org
- www.rncnotwelcome.org
- www.rncwatch.org
- nyc.indymedia.org

got floor
space?

Thousands of visiting
RNC protesters will need
a place to stay between
Aug. 28 and Sept. 2.

If you can offer any kind
of housing please post
your availability on the
housing board at
www.counterconvention.org

If you have questions
or seek larger group
accommodations, contact
rnchousing@yahoo.com
or call 212-696-6625



SEE YOU IN
THE STREETS

People write
their own permits

By A.K. GUPTA

With hundreds of parties, protests, marches, cultural events, and rallies in late August, there’s no lack of activities.

The largest event will be United for Peace and Justice’s march around Madison Square Garden and rally on the West Side Highway Sunday, Aug. 29. UFJP says it decided to end the battle over gaining access to Central Park because it was detracting from organizing efforts.

Nonetheless, UFJP representatives say they are encouraging “feeder” marches to the protest going past the Garden and the rally on the highway near Ground Zero.

A call from youth and student groups has already gone out “to begin exercising our rights to the fullest, recreating our democracy, and reclaiming the public space that is Central Park.” They are publicizing many places in the park where people can assemble earlier in the day.

Check nyc.indymedia.org for locations to gather in Central Park and through the city to feed into the main march on Aug. 29.

A call for a “Mouse Bloc” has been issued for the evening of Aug. 29 when some 13,000 Republicans descend on Broadway for Disneyfied fare like “Beauty and the Beast” and “The Lion King.”

“We will remind the forgetful old elephants that they are not welcome in this town,” one mouse wrote on the NYC indymedia newswire. “They will not be able to have fun at our expense without facing thousands of pissed off mice in the streets.”

One of the most militant actions is being organized by the Kensington Welfare Rights Union. They are holding a permitted rally at Dag Hammarskjöld near 45th St. and 1st Ave. on the afternoon of Monday, Aug. 30. The New York police denied them a permit to march past the United Nations to Times Square then south down 7th Ave. to Madison Square Garden.

KWRU organizers say police officials have told them anyone attempting to march will be arrested,

By JED BRANDT

George W. Bush made a *big* mistake coming to New York. Hundreds of thousands of people are already preparing to give Bush the bum’s rush come convention time. But getting hyped isn’t the same as getting ready. If you’re looking to do your part, here’s nine simple things you can do to get the ball rolling.

1. Don’t Wait for Everybody Else

Politics is something best not left to the professionals. Talk to your family, friends and co-workers and see what they’re thinking. Share information, speak your peace and spread the word. Showing up for the protests is easy, making the whole city come out is a little trickier. Websites like CounterConvention.org have tons of info and resources for how you can get involved. But everyone can find something.

2. Don’t Believe the Hype

The media isn’t any more democratic than your boss. The newspapers and TV are owned by massive corporations that love Bush, fear the people and want everybody to stay home during the RNC. They lie. Don’t let somebody tell you what to think. Check nyc.indymedia.org for real info.

3. Invest in a Magic Marker

How many bathroom walls are needlessly boring? How many subway ads need a little touch-up? Carry a fat-tip and you’ll be amazed at how much magic comes from every marker. Write clearly, put up the protest dates and let the world know what you think. For anyone who thinks this is “vandalism,” what do you call advertising?

NOTE TO TAGGERS: Time to write more than your name.

4. Join a Group, Form a Crew

If you see a group doing work you like, join them. If you don’t, call five friends and figure out what’s missing. RNCnotwelcome.org has handbooks on “direct action” for beginners. Activists are just regular people who take democracy seriously. Right now, most people are trying to get the word out. UnitedforPeace.org and NION.net have info on flyering.

5. Don’t Hate, Celebrate

If you don’t agree with what other people are doing, show them a better way. Cynical chic is soooo 20th Century. Everybody’s not going to agree on everything, so do your own thing before you hate on someone else.

6. Decorate Your Neighborhood

Start with signs in your windows and offer some to local shops. Put up posters and art telling Bush he’s not welcome. But why stop there? NoRNCposterProject.org has posters available for download and the “Our Cities, Our Walls” poster book available in bulk. Spraypainting stencils are also easily made with an exacto knife and cardboard. One can, properly deployed, reach tens of thousands of people at subway entrances, along expressways and near the entrances to parks, clubs and commercial zones. Go crazy!

7. Be Your Own Best Self

8. Raise Money NOW

New York City has 8 million people. Printing materials costs money. *The Independent* will be printing up hundreds of thousands of papers to let everybody know. Every \$50 you send will print thousands of free papers. If you’ve got a good job, send more. If you’re broke, throw a party! Call 212.684.8112 for more information.

9. Make a Plan

When the RNC comes to town, the police might play hardball against protesters no matter how reasonable we are. Don’t just show up alone and wander around. Get together with friends now and think up something special to do together at the protests. Chanting and sign-waving get boring unless you do it with flair, costumes and music. For those hoping to disrupt the convention, it will take all your guile. Start thinking now.

THE INDEPENDENT

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9 things
YOU
can do *now*

Getting Ready for the
Republican National Convention

George W. Bush made a *big* mistake coming to New York. Hundreds of thousands of people are already preparing to give Bush the bum’s rush come convention time. But getting hyped isn’t the same as getting ready. If you’re looking to do your part, here’s nine simple things you can do to get the ball rolling.

By JED BRANDT

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THE INDEPENDENT

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NEWS IN BRIEF

FLORIDA VOTING MACHINES STILL FLAWED

Florida's touch-screen voting machines don't record votes as accurately as the older optical ballot scanning technology. The newly purchased machines discarded 1 percent of ballots cast in a statewide election this year, while optical scanners rejected only one-tenth of one percent. Moreover, touch-screen voting machines in 11 Florida counties have a software flaw that might make manual recounts impossible. The implementation of touch-screen voting machines was intended to be Florida's solution to the vote-counting fiasco in 2000.

HOUSE MEMBERS BAN U.N. OBSERVERS FOR ELECTION

The House of Representatives voted Thursday, July 15 to bar any federal official from requesting that the U.N. formally observe the national election. The measure, proposed by Rep. Steve Buyer (R-Ind.) was approved 243-161 as an amendment to a \$19.4 billion foreign aid bill.

Following the vote, a verbal battle broke out on the floor, in which Rep. Corrine Brown (D-Fla.) accused the Republicans of stealing the 2000 election. The House voted to strike her words from the record.

UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE FOR FETUSES

In a stealthy move towards outlawing abortion, the Bush administration is considering offering publicly funded healthcare for fetuses. Under the plan, states will be allowed to define a fetus as "a targeted low-income child" and offer them pre-natal care under the Children's Health Insurance Program. Laurie Rubiner, Vice President of the National Partnership for Women and Families, says that "The real goal [of the plan] is to establish a legal precedent for granting personhood to fetuses." This precedent is important because in *Roe v. Wade*, the Supreme Court based its decision to legalize abortion on the judgment that "the unborn have never been recognized in the law as persons in the whole sense."

The Bush administration has no current plans to extend healthcare to the more than 50 million post-natal Americans who are uninsured.

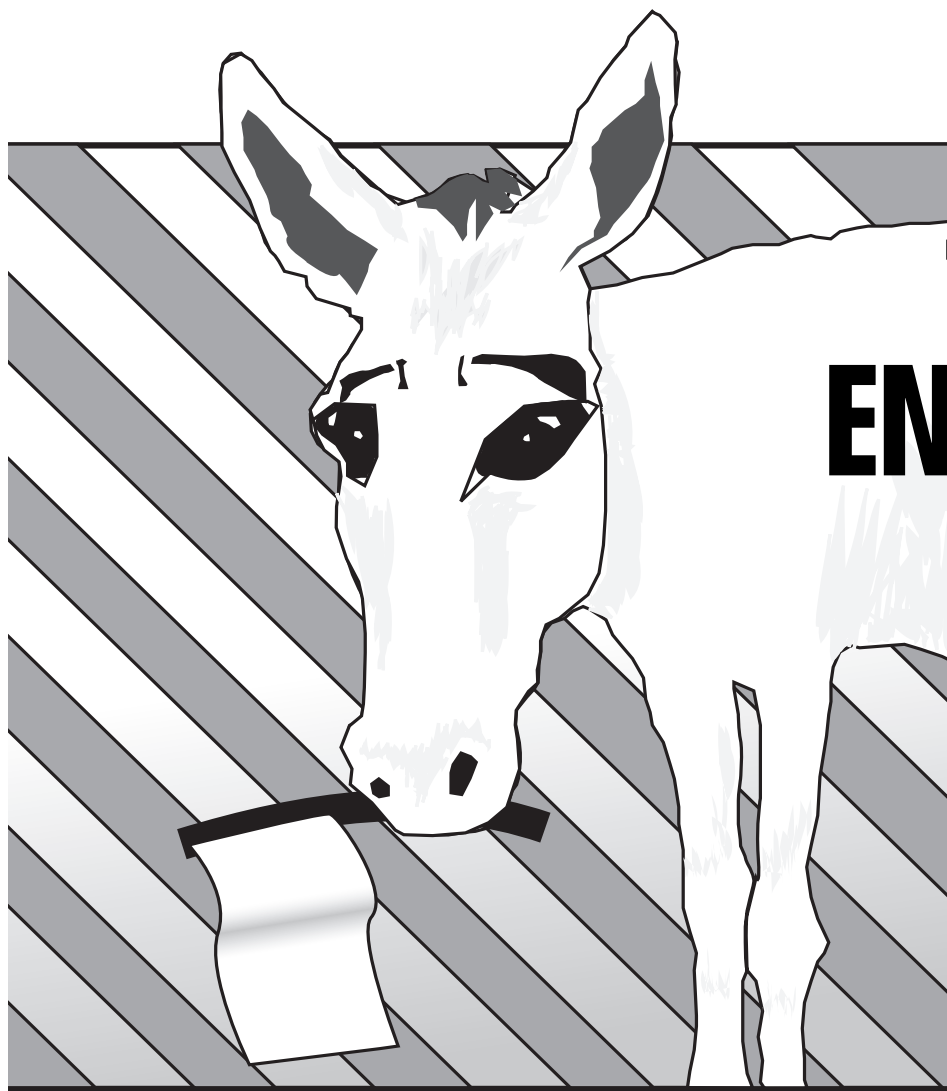
LOUISVILLE INSTITUTES DRESS CODE

The City of Louisville, Kentucky has allowed the developer of its new nightclub district to enforce a dress code on public streets three nights a week. During those nights, the block-long strip of restaurants, bars and shops is blocked off and bouncers kick out anyone wearing baggy pants, sports jerseys or backward baseball caps. The ACLU is objecting to the ban, saying that the dress code is biased against minorities and poor people.

BLACKOUT CUT DOWN POLLUTION

Scientists at the University of Maryland report that the power blackout last August caused a dramatic decrease in air pollution across the Northeast. Levels of sulfur dioxide dropped by 90 percent, ozone levels were cut in half and light scattered by airborne particles was down to less than a third of previous levels.

debate the news
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BY RON JACOBS

Well, history has repeated itself and, just like the saying goes, this time around it is pure farce. In this instance, I am referring to the attempt by Kucinich supporters to attach an anti-war plank to the Democratic Party's 2004 platform. As anyone knows, of course, these platforms don't really mean much of anything, but the fact that the Kerry people fought even the inclusion of a statement that called the Iraq war wrong from its inception proves once again how little difference there really is in the campaigns of the two men running for president of the United States this year. It also proves the pointlessness of any group of left-leaning Democrats who still believe that their party is capable of redemption along McGovernite lines.

The original hope of the Kucinich campaign – a campaign that voiced clear opposition to the war and ran on a demand that the U.S. withdraw from Iraq – was that the Democratic Party platform for 2004 would include language that included a timetable for the withdrawal of all U.S. military forces from Iraq and also made clear that the party considered the war on Iraq a mistake from the beginning.

What the Kucinich campaign got instead was "a commitment to begin the process to talk about bringing the troops home" according to Kucinich's campaign manager, Tim Carpenter. In short, they got nothing, since the conversation Mr. Carpenter is referring to what has already begun in the streets and workplaces of the nation.

To add injury to insult, Kucinich called some supporters and told them that this retreat was some kind of a victory. If I were one of those supporters, I would have hung up on Mr. Kucinich quicker than I do on a solicitor. This is no victory. If anything, it further acknowledges the bankruptcy of the two-party system. Not only have the remaining anti-war forces in the Democratic Party been relegated to the sidelines at the party convention, they've convinced themselves that their silencing is a victory. All of this done, of course, in the name of party unity and a desire to beat George Bush.

In 1968, there was a much larger anti-war contingent within the Democratic Party. This contingent was represented by the Eugene McCarthy and Robert Kennedy (later McGovern, after RFK's murder) campaigns. Despite the failure of these campaigns to win the nomination, the anti-war forces that pro-

pelled them fought to the bitter end to get their anti-war plank into the party's platform. They failed, in part due to manipulations by the pro-war forces in the party represented by Hubert Humphrey. Once their failure became apparent, most of these Democrats either left the Convention Center and joined their fellow peace activists in the streets of Chicago or they continued to search for ways to get their message out to the American people from the convention floor. Of course, those who did the former were gassed and beaten and those who attempted the latter were shouted down or physically removed from the convention floor.

How times have changed. After 1968, the anti-war forces briefly took over the Democratic Party and ran George McGovern in 1972. Thanks to a lack of support from the party's corporate backers, an uneven campaign strategy, and a Republican campaign that included numerous dirty tricks, McGovern lost and the progressive forces within the Democratic Party moved back into the shadows. Since then, these forces have played a role that revolves primarily around keeping progressive independents from running a third-party campaign (a role ironically now also

Kucinich Surrenders
on Anti-War Plank

THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULDN'T

played by the Greens). By performing this role, these forces have prevented the progressive voice in U.S. electoral politics from being heard in any effective manner and have helped create the current political situation in the U.S. where most people don't vote and those that do have a choice that only represents the American right-wing.

Which brings us to this year's Democratic convention. Their nominee, John Kerry, represents the less conservative wing of America's right-wing establishment and might win the November election if it is held and if his campaign can motivate enough voters to bother voting. As has been the case since 1972, progressive Americans have no one whom they can vote for, only someone to vote against. It is these voters that Kerry is counting on and it is these voters who Kucinich and Nader try to represent. Unfortunately, Mr. Kucinich refuses to leave the Democratic Party – a decision that rendered his campaign moribund from the beginning, and Nader cannot get the funds a national campaign requires in today's America. Not that it would matter much if either of these men's campaigns actually had a chance of winning, since the moneyed interests who really elect this country's presidents would never allow anyone with Kucinich's or Nader's opinions to move into 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue.

Given this, one would think that Mr. Kucinich would not give up so easily on his desire to get some anti-war language into the Democratic platform. After all, what does he have to lose? Instead, his supporters and the rest of the Anyone-But-Bush mindset are left to vote for John Kerry, a man who not only supported the Iraq war from its beginnings, but also hopes to expand it to NATO if he's elected. How is that any different from George Bush?

Ron Jacobs is author of The Way the Wind Blew: a history of the Weather Underground, excerpted from counterpunch.org

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BOLIVIAN VOTE AGAINST VOTING

Referendum on Bolivia's vast national gas reserves rejected by impoverished majority who want nationalization

Bolivia has long had its wealth plundered by foreigners. First it was silver, then saltpeter and later tin. Last fall, an enraged populace chased President Gonzalo Sánchez de Lozada into exile after scores of demonstrators were killed during protests against his plans to privatize the nation's enormous natural gas reserves and ship them to the U.S. On July 18, Bolivia's new president Carlos Mesa held a referendum on the gas reserves. Voters were given five different questions to vote on relating to state-owned companies, management restructuring, and the sale and use of the proceeds from the gas. Nationalization, an option favored by many Bolivians, was not on the ballot, however. Jennifer Whitney reports from Bolivia on what is being called the "Tramperendum."

BY JENNIFER WHITNEY

EL ALTO, Bolivia—I visited a few polling stations today in El Alto, a predominantly indigenous city of about 700,000 people that sits in the mountains above the capital of La Paz.

Early in the morning, I watched an Aymara woman as she emerged from the private voting room, ballot in hand, a huge grin on her face. An election official stopped her from putting her ballot in the box, and began chastising her for folding it improperly, with her votes (or lack of) visible from the outside. He tried to fold it properly, with the votes on the inside, but she resisted, and by then enough people had seen her ballot that it had to be declared null and void. She watched with a smile as they marked it uncountable.

In Bolivia, voting is obligatory, and abstention is punishable by a fine equivalent to about a month's salary, not to mention that failing to vote means that one cannot conduct banking transactions, nor travel, among other serious inconveniences. Even so, many voting stations are reporting record-high levels of abstention.

In Senkata, a region of El Alto, blockades of burning tires were still smoldering at 6:30 this morning, despite a light drift of snow that fell the night before. Few people were out, and the street was silent. When I returned several hours later, about 200 people had gathered. The atmosphere was calm, though they had driven out several journalists a half hour prior to our arrival. Most people were quite friendly and eager to share their perspective.

I spoke with Marco, a member of

FEJUVE — the federation of neighborhood assemblies, which has around 900 participating groups in El Alto and La Paz combined.

Marco asserted that what we were witnessing today was "the dictatorship version of democracy. We shouldn't have to vote when there is nothing on the ballot we believe in. For us to be required to vote, under the vigilance of federal police and with the threat of expensive fines — this is not democracy."

While we were speaking, the police, who had gathered about a half mile away, zoomed up alongside the blockade on their motorcycles, circled the demonstration, paused for a bit, and then headed back on the other side. A few rocks were thrown at them, but they were largely ignored. Marco didn't miss a beat.

"We have a high unemployment rate; they promised 500,000 jobs and instead we have 500,000 unemployed people, and so we cannot keep following these same policies, exporting the gas, selling everything."

"This is why we are rebelling. October taught us a lot. We know that we have nothing, and yet they're selling everything they can get away with to the U.S. And all of us here, we are alive now, but we're also dying. And we know that life is not eternal. None of us can say 'I have to stay alive, my life is worth so much.' It's not like that."

"All of us are ready to die. Because when we are always fighting for survival, struggling just to fill our stomachs, we can't have a good life. We prefer to die with dignity."

A commotion distracts us, and Marco excuses himself so he can go and join his neighbors. Two SUVs have approached the blockade, and about eight men get out.

They are from the Organization of American States, which has sent election observers to monitor the proceedings. Strangely, they are approaching the blockade, on foot, as if they imagined they would be welcome here. Sharp whistling fills the air, and people call for rocks and sticks. The officials beat a quick retreat to their vehicles, and speed away.

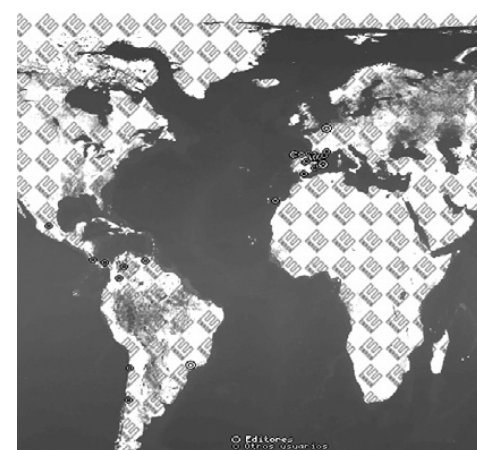
The group I have come with is ready to go, and so we head away from the blockade to where our taxi is waiting. On the way back down to the city, the streets are empty of traffic. We are trailed by gleeful skateboarders, roller-bladers, joggers, dog-walkers and battalions of cyclists. On the opposite, uphill lanes, we pass by a game of tennis, and then a soccer match. Laundry is spread out to dry on the adjacent hillside, and people lie basking in the sun, despite the fact that it is about 50 degrees and windy. The radio carries reports of plans to blockade the transport of ballots after the elections; some say there are plans to burn them. In every imaginable way, this is different from any election I have ever dreamed of.

As I write, the numbers are coming in. At this point, all five questions are passing; an incredible vote of confidence in Mesa's government... or is it? With 40 percent abstention and 15 percent of ballots thus far either blank or void, it seems that only about 50 percent of the electorate voted at all — that is to say, about 23 percent of Bolivian's population. Not much on which to base one's legitimacy.

Whatever the government decides to do, the people have spoken very clearly — this referendum doesn't come close to their primary demand — nationalization of their gas. As Marco put it, "There are going to be actions in the future that will be much stronger and more radical than those of October. We will not stop until we get nationalization."

A longer version of this story originally appeared at <http://www.indymedia.org/en/2004/07/11495.shtml>.

ENRON'S GLOBAL FRAUD



BY ISHAAN THAROOR

Enron CEO Kenneth Lay recently surrendered to the FBI on charges of defrauding investors. Enron's management has been implicated in numerous episodes of shady dealing over the years. From price-gouging in California to funding the political campaigns of conservatives in the U.K. and the U.S. (most notably the Bush family), the U.S.'s largest overseas investor unabashedly wielded its financial and political influence. Some of Enron's notable scams outside the United States include:

INDIA: Partnering with Bechtel and General Electric, Enron poured more than \$3 billion into the western state of Maharashtra to create the Dahbol Power Company in 1993. Intended to signal India's desirability for foreign investment, the project involved substantial bribes, U.S. government pressure and human rights violations. Once the power plant was constructed, Enron charged the Maharashtra State Electricity Board exorbitant prices for its electricity. The Board eventually refused to pay and the plant was mothballed.

A 2002 Human Rights Watch report criticized Enron and the Dahbol Power Company for recklessly damaging the surrounding rural environment and being complicit in state repression of local activists and villagers who protested against the DPC.

A U.S. court recently gave Enron's remaining stake in the project to Bechtel and GE.

ARGENTINA: In possibly his first foray into foreign affairs, then-Texas Gov. Bush lobbied the Argentine government in 1988 to award Enron a contract for the construction of natural gas pipelines. The Texas-based company had no prior experience in Argentina and offered a bid worth far less than that of competitors. Threatening to cease U.S. investment in the region, Bush family members convinced right-wing President and pal Carlos Menem to approve Enron's bid.

A decade later, Azurix, an Enron subsidiary focused on water privatization, lost its contract over water rights in Buenos Aires Province due to alleged corruption, lengthy service interruptions and frequent failure to ensure the cleanliness of the water.

MOZAMBIQUE: Coerced by CIA and State Department officials, Mozambique granted a lopsided contract to Enron in 1995 in order to construct a pipeline to South Africa. Said Mozambique's then-Minister of Natural Resources, John Kachamila, "Enron was forever playing games with us and the U.S. embassy forever threatening to withdraw aid... all I wanted was a better deal for the state."

Indymedia is a collective of independent media organizations with hundreds of journalists offering news coverage from the grassroots. The following reports are a sample of recent stories posted to local Indymedia websites around the world. To see a complete listing of Indymedia sites, visit www.indymedia.org.

**Guadalajara CMI
PROTESTERS STILL HELD
IN GUADALAJARA**

Thirty-three activists are still imprisoned in Guadalajara, Mexico, pending payment of bail. They were arrested on May 28 while protesting a gathering of heads of state from the EU, Latin America and the Caribbean. Solidarity demonstrations were held in Guadalajara and Madrid on June 28.

**Chile (Santiago) IMC
STRIKING CHILEAN
WORKERS ATTACKED**

One hundred and fifty workers at the Indalum factory in Santiago, Chile went on strike on Friday July 2, seeking higher wages. Since that date, they have faced repeated attacks by customs officers. More than fifty workers have been injured, ten have been imprisoned and one has been hospitalized.

**Indybay
JEWISH ACTIVIST DENIED
ENTRY TO ISRAEL**

Jamie Spector, a San Francisco social worker and activist, was detained at Ben Gurion International Airport in Tel Aviv for nine hours, interrogated for another hour and is still being held. She was planning to take part in non-violent demonstrations against the "apartheid wall" Israel is building in the West Bank. It is believed that she and others were targeted for deportation because of their association with the International Solidarity Movement. Over a dozen human rights advocates and activists have been barred from entering Israel in the past month.

**Paris IMC
EUROPEAN ANTI-TERRORISM
LAWS USED AGAINST ITALIAN
ACTIVISTS**

In the early 1980s, hundreds of Italian activists fleeing unfair trials found political asylum in France. Now, the right-wing government of corrupt billionaire media mogul Silvio Berlusconi is trying to use European anti-terrorism laws, inspired by the Patriot Act, to force the French government to expel three Italian activists, including the author Cesare Battisti. If repatriated, the activists will not receive new trials but will be sent directly to jail, in some cases, for life. A major petition campaign is currently underway in France in support of Cesare Battisti.

**Ecuador IMC
ECUADOR IMC ACTIVIST
ASSASSINATED**

23-year-old Lenin Cali Najera, national leader of the Youth of Pachakutik and founding member of Indymedia Guayaquil, was assassinated on June 29.

THE ISLAMIC EMIRATE OF FALLUJAH

BY PEPE ESCOBAR

Taliban leader Mullah Omar, one of America's most wanted, would love it: it's the new Kandahar, the Afghan city that was once the Taliban stronghold. Under Sharia (Islamic law), Fallujah is now totally under the control of the Sunni Iraqi resistance and their emirs (lords). More than 10,000 mujahideen armed to their teeth rule more than 500,000 people, just 50 kilometers west of Baghdad.

Writers and professors in Baghdad with close family and tribal ties to Fallujah have explained the new order. In today's Fallujah, every military commander is an emir. They may be strident, conservative Salafis, philosophical Sufis, al-Qaeda admirers, former Ba'ath Party army officials, former secret-service agents, or even the average neighbor, a father of six.

If you qualify as an emir, you are a leading member of what is popularly described as "the Iraqi resistance" in control of "liberated Fallujah", a region off-limits to US troops ever since the United States handed over control of the city in May after a month-long siege.

Along with local imams and tribal chiefs, all emirs are also part of a Shura, a mujahideen council, created last winter and directed by two imams, Abdullah Janabi and Dhafer al-Ubeidi.

These imams may be considered the spiritual leaders of the resistance in Fallujah. Janabi, from the Saad bin Abi Wakkas Mosque, is a true radical: he is the leader of the takfiris, the fiercest warriors, some Iraqi, some from other Arab countries, some voluntary, some linked to Arab groups. Janabi was the first imam in 2003 to call for armed resistance against the occupation of Iraq, and for the summary execution of spies. Dhafer, from the al-Hadra al-Muhammadiya mosque, is senior to Janabi in the Shura. His fatwas (religious edicts) carry enormous influence.

Fallujah is mujahideen country where the resistance undertakes military training, hides weapons, contacts foreign fighters and organizes operations against a variety of targets in and around Baghdad. A selected group of mujahideen work as couriers between mosques in Fallujah and Baghdad. Many mujahideen are boys who started their military training in early 2002.

The mujahideen paint a picture of a city where Sharia may be the norm though the air hangs heavy with paranoia, just as it did in Taliban-ruled Afghanistan and Saddam Hussein's Iraq. The city may be free of marines but is under siege by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi's new secret-service agents and Central Intelligence Agency operatives. These spies are executed the minute any of the emirs identify them. The emirs parade around town in luxury Western cars with tinted windows, just like the Taliban with their Toyota Land Cruisers did in Afghanistan.

Sharia applies to the 500,000 Iraqis living in Fallujah and its surroundings. On a stretch of the busy Fallujah-Ramadi road, the local unemployed youth used to hang out drinking beer or whisky and talking about soccer and girls. After their de facto victory against the marines in April, the mujahideen took over the stretch and paraded some youngsters around the city taking a beating in the back of a pickup truck, Taliban style, just to show how things had changed.

An undeclared "foreigner-hunting season" is in effect. It has claimed, among other victims, a Lebanese businessman, the South Korean national Kim Sun-Il, and six Shi'ite truck drivers. Janabi justifies all the executions. During the past three months, the mujahideen have also executed more than 30 Fallujah residents, all of them denounced as spies for the Americans.

Allah's decrees are splashed all over Fallujah. These decrees warn against foreigners, forbid alcohol and threaten any women not wearing the abaya (veil) or tempted to apply some counterfeit foreign perfume over their unveiled faces. Hairdressers and ordinary Iraqis trying to make ends meet by selling compact discs also received a mujahideen visit.

The Americans, meanwhile, are out at their two bases in Saqlawiyah, a small town near Fallujah. The resistance fires rockets at these bases almost daily in response to U.S. air raids that usually kill dozens of Iraqi civilians. The Americans – with Allawi's backing – keep hitting Fallujah with one-ton bombs.

The four Blackwater employees shot, cremated and suspended from a bridge in April led to the extensive bombing of Fallujah by Americans (and to more than 600 Iraqi civilian deaths). The Americans then created a so-called brigade of former Ba'athists to provide security to the city.

Every entrance to the city is controlled by the mujahideen, who also control the US-trained Iraqi policemen. Most men in the Iraqi National Guard and the Iraqi police are now mujahideen. The real Ba'ath military power in Fallujah is in the hands of two people with very close ties to the emirs: Jassem Mohammed Saleh – the first commander of the Fallujah Brigade – and Abdullah Hamed.

The Fallujah-connected sources say that the new US-Allawi-appointed Iraqi secret services hoped the Ba'ath military in Fallujah would circumvent the influence of the mujahideen. The exact opposite has happened in Fallujah where Ba'athists now answer to the emirs in control of the resistance.

ARMED RESISTANCE OR BUST

Imam Mahdi al-Sumaidai, who spent five months in Abu Ghraib prison because the Americans found weapons hidden in his mosque, is considered in Baghdad the key Iraqi Salafi leader and the spiritual leader of Sunni guerrillas all over the country. He strongly advocates that the only way forward is through armed struggle, pointing to the fact that the resistance has expanded from a few men to a few cities in just a year.

Qays al-Fakhri, a spokesman for the Salafis, adds that the resistance has proved some incontrovertible points: the US military machine is not invincible; security in Fallujah is now excellent; and "history teaches us that only armed resistance can end a foreign military occupation".

Excerpted from Asia Times, www.atimes.com

The Wall

by Seth Tobocman



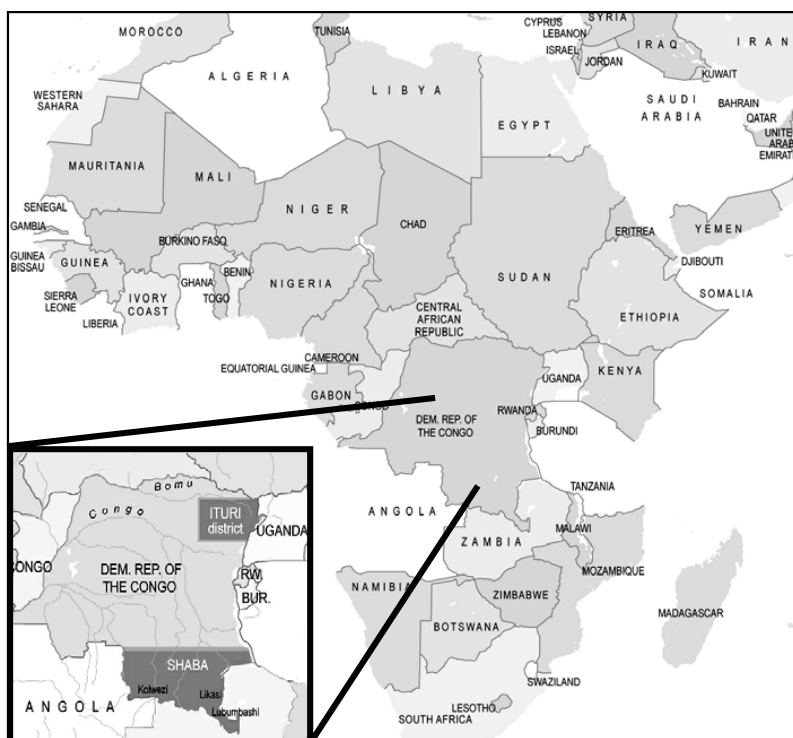
WORLD WAR 3 REPORT

VIGILANT, INDEPENDENT SENTRY OF TRUTH IN THE WAR ON TERRORISM

Bill Weinberg, Editor

www.ww3report.com

While some 10,000 “peacekeeping” forces serving under the United Nations occupy much of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to uphold recent peace accords, powerful interests continue to pillage land, resources, and people with impunity. Behind the headlines of “tribal warfare” splashed over Western media are intelligence operatives, private military companies, arms merchants, multinational corporations and their agents, and mining executives operating through offshore bank accounts.



CARVING UP THE CONGO

Friendly Dictators Join ‘War on Terror,’ Come to Washington for Prayer Breakfast

BY KEITH HARMON SNOW

Observers warn that despite the peace accords, Congo’s “Third War” has now begun. The first Congo war was the 1995-6 insurgency against longtime dictator Mobutu Sese Seko (under whom the country was called Zaire), led by the guerrilla army of Laurent Kabila and supported by Rwanda and Uganda. The second war began in 1998, when Kabila (then president of the newly-named DRC) broke with Rwanda and Uganda, throwing out their military advisors, along with the U.S. Agency for International Development -- and cancelled plans to have Bechtel rebuild Congo’s mining sector.

This was dubbed “Africa’s First World War,” with Angola and Zimbabwe backing Kabila against (U.S.-backed) Rwanda and Uganda, which first supported anti-Kabila rebel groups in the east, and then intervened directly as well. The country was effectively partitioned, with the government losing control of much of the east, where Congo’s mineral resources are.

Laurent Kabila was assassinated in 2001, and succeeded by his son Joseph. South Africa and the United Nations brokered an accord, and peacekeepers moved in -- although some key warring parties were excluded from the accords.

The International Monetary Fund and World Bank favored Joseph Kabila’s transitional government with loans worth \$1.2 billion in June 2002, while Sweden, Belgium, France and South Africa loaned some \$522 million.

Now says Jean-Marie Vianney Higiroy, leader of the Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Rwanda, the peace is definitively breaking down, as Rwanda makes a play for permanent control of eastern Congo.

Many see the hand of Washington behind Rwanda’s perceived designs on Congolese territory. President Paul Kagame is a graduate of the U.S. Army’s Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Prior to taking power in Rwanda in 1994, Kagame was head of military intelligence for U.S.-backed Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni’s Internal Security Organization.

Congo’s Orientale province borders Uganda and Sudan, and its Ituri district is

arguably the bloodiest corner of the world. From 1999 to April 2003, at least 50,000 civilians perished in the region.

Ituri is rich in petroleum, gold, ivory, diamonds, timber and columbo-tantalite (coltan) -- raw materials coveted by international commodities traders. Coltan micro-capacitors are used in cellphones, Sony Playstations, laptop computer screens, and high-tech info-warfare gadgetry.

Observers say the Ugandan and Rwandan armies have stripped coltan, gold and diamonds out of eastern Congo as rapidly as possible. Human rights groups accuse troops from Uganda and Rwanda of forcing prisoners under inhuman conditions to mine coltan later shipped out of Rwanda and Uganda.

DIAMONDS, COBALT, URANIUM

Even where the government has control, things are grim in Congo. Shaba is Congo’s southern province, long the site of separatist movements seeking to maintain or wrest control of resources. Shaba (formerly known as Katanga) is rich in diamonds, cobalt, copper, palladium and germanium.

Cobalt is a strategic alloy used in the aerospace and defense industries, and was stockpiled by the Pentagon during the Cold War. Maintaining Shaba’s “cobalt connection” was paramount to the Mobutu dictatorship.

Falling within the Kinshasa government’s sphere of control, Shaba has seen its share of repression and warfare. The ruling Kabila family is from Shaba, and Kinshasa maintained control the region in the recent years of war with the aid of troops from the allied Zimbabwe Defense Forces (ZDF). The Zimbabwean military has officially pulled out of Congo, but unconfirmed reports suggest some troops remain.

“An elite network of Congolese and Zimbabwean political, military and commercial interests has maintained a grip on the main mineral resources of government-controlled areas,” concluded a U.N. Panel of Experts in 2002.

The U.N. reported this network had transferred ownership of at least \$5 billion in assets from the state mining sector to private companies from 1999-2002 with no benefit to Congo. “The network’s representatives in the Kinshasa Government and the ZDF have fueled instability, by sup-

porting armed groups opposing Rwanda and Burundi,” the U.N. report found.

U.S. SUPPORTING TERROR

Amnesty International in 2002 reported U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and Special Forces’ involvement in the 1996 invasion of Congo/Zaire. The report said that DIA assisted Rwandan and Ugandan forces through a program code-named “Falcon Gorilla.” In 1997, the DIA held a Pentagon symposium on privatization of African security operations with Executive Outcomes, Sandline International and mineral interests.

The Pentagon maintains four separate military training and assistance programs with both Rwanda and Uganda. The Washington Post reported August 16, 1997, that the RPF benefited from counterinsurgency and combat training from U.S. Special Forces. The Falcon Gorilla operation in support of the Rwanda-Uganda intervention in Congo reportedly came under the Pentagon’s Joint Combined Exchange Training.

It is clear that the United States has tilted to Uganda and Rwanda. Rwanda’s Paul Kagame spoke at least twice at the Carr Center for Human Rights at Harvard University, and has met with George H. W. Bush at the James Baker Institute for Public Policy in Houston, and at the Council on Foreign Relations. Kagame was a guest, with Joseph Kabila, at a Washington prayer breakfast soon after George W. Bush assumed office. Uganda’s Museveni was a guest speaker at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington D.C. on June 11, 2004.

Rwanda and Uganda continue to be rewarded with World Bank and IMF loans, despite accusations that funds are diverted to purchase military equipment and prosecute war in their own and neighboring countries.

And U.S. military involvement in the region is about to deepen. Preceding his trip to Africa in July 2003, President Bush announced a \$100 million aid package for east African countries, pointing to greater U.S. strategic interest in the region. “We will work with Kenya and Ethiopia and Djibouti and Uganda and Tanzania to improve capabilities... We will give them the tools and the resources to win the War on Terror.”

From WW3Report.com

25th Anniversary

SANDINISTA REVOLUTION REVISITED

INTERVIEW BY ARLENE HERMIDA

Hugo Meneses was 18 when he fled the tiny Central American nation of Nicaragua in 1975. A member of the leftist Sandinistas, he was active as a union organizer and a member of the Christian youth movement. In July of 1979, Anastasio Somoza, the U.S.-backed dictator of Nicaragua was overthrown by a popular revolution that electrified activists around the world. Meneses returned to his homeland and threw himself into the work of rebuilding his country. However, the Sandinistas themselves were toppled from power in 1990. Looking back on his experiences, Meneses recently spoke with *The Independent* about a revolution that he says still remains to be completed.

What do you remember about the Somoza dictatorship and its downfall?

In Nicaragua during the Somoza time, it was a situation where you could not be outside after 6pm, you could not meet in any place, and most of your rights were violated. It was practically a crime to be young in the Somoza regime. When the Revolution triumphed, I was so happy knowing that the little effort each of us made contributed to our liberation. It was the result of all our work.

What was some of the work you did for the Revolution?

One of the first challenges I had was the literacy campaign. I went to a rural area where the only communication was an AM radio frequency. We were out there to bring people education so they could read and write. I lost about forty-five pounds but it was something that was a pleasure to do. Everybody was involved. It was above yourself. It was something for all. Later, I went around the world representing my people, representing all the struggles that we were going through. We were able to explain and win a lot of support and a lot of friends for the revolution.

How do you feel about the U.S.-sponsored Contra War that killed 30,000 Nicaraguans during the 1980s and that led to the Sandinistas electoral defeat in 1990?

It was hard to see people getting killed. They didn’t deserve to die just because somebody didn’t want this government. It really affected our people. It was something that still brings memories of sometimes feeling too small to do something about it. I don’t think the election was bad; the loss of the election was a result of this war. But the war was practically the worst thing that happened. It was a terrorist war.

How are things in Nicaragua today?

Unemployment is 65%. The external debt is very high. The rich are getting richer, the poor are getting poorer and the situation is worse than in 1980s, when we had an economic blockade and a war against our people. Even during that time, the people were able to eat; the people were able to have free health care, free education.

Do you feel that all the work you did was lost after the Sandinistas were defeated?

I think we established a symbol of the possibility, of being able to succeed as a people, as a country, as ourselves. The youth right now are asking a lot of questions about the revolution, because they notice the principles that their parents are showing them are more important than what they are getting through a regular education.



How to find your G-spot

The G-spot is about two inches inside the vagina towards the belly, right behind the pubic bone. It's composed of spongy tissue that is wrapped around the urethra. When a woman is aroused, it becomes thicker as it fills with fluid and can be felt through the vaginal wall. Angle your penetration or select a curved sex toy and apply firm rhythmic pressure to pleasure the G-spot. Some women find this sensation highly sexual and some women expel a clear fluid called female ejaculate (it's not urine) from G-spot stimulation. Every woman has a G-spot, but not every woman loves having it pressed or otherwise stimulated. You'll just have to try it for yourself!



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[Carol Downer, Founder, Federation of Feminist Women's Health Centers]

"As an avowed anarchist, and a committed anti-capitalist, I try to learn from the lessons of history in order to devise better tactics, and recognize viable strategies for overthrowing capitalism. And while I'm an anarchist, I do recognize that in 1917 a small group of revolutionaries did achieve one of, if not the, greatest anti-capitalist transformations in world history. Indeed the Bolshevik Revolution thrilled millions of anti-capitalist anarchists around the world when it occurred, including Emma Goldman. The October revolution was led by a brilliant geo-political analyst, Vladimir Lenin. Having watched this video, I'd say if Lenin were alive today, he'd sound a lot like Bob Avakian."

[Alan Minsky, Senior Producer at KPFK in Los Angeles and co-founder of the LA Independent Media Center]

"Whatever your political orientation or religious background, this comes across as a challenge that must be heard and wrestled with. There is great depth and seriousness in Bob Avakian's analysis of a situation which most of us have failed to fully recognize. But he is confident that we can create a viable future for the planet."

[Reverend George W. Weber, President Emeritus, New York Theological Seminary]

"Bob Avakian, a thinker and activist of remarkable critical insights, sums up the lessons he has learned and the conclusions he has determined during more than thirty years of activism and leadership and guides present and future activists through a tough course which leads to the understanding of the imperatives for a new society."

[Dr. Juan Gomez Quinones, historian and writer, UCLA]

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REVIEWS

CULTURE, POLITICS AND CRITICISM

BEATEN DOWN BY 'THE MAN'

THE CORPORATION
DIR. MARK ACHBAR & JENNIFER ABBOT

A corporation is a behemoth and, fittingly, so is the film that tackles it. A dense two-and-a-half hour polemic, *The Corporation* sets out to deconstruct the conditions and structures of society that enable corporations to flourish, revealing the environmental and human damage wreaked by these faceless and stateless bodies.

However, outside of a number of exclusive interviews with prominent CEOs and members of the business community, and a who's who list of the guardian angels of the left (Howard Zinn, Noam Chomsky, Naomi Klein, and, yes, Michael Moore), the film offers very little original footage.

The Corporation progresses by chapters: explaining the origins of corporate power, presenting the viewer with myriad case studies of the abuse of that power, and ending with a diagnosis of this predatory, ruthless entity. In a rare light moment in an otherwise grim documentary, the film maps a running checklist of psychopathic behavioral traits onto its interpretations of corporate actions. The predictable diagnosis assures us that the corporation is pathologically insane.

The corporation is undeniably the single most dominant institution today. No corner of the globe, strata of society, or government remains untouched by corporate influence and free-market politics. To reflect the corporation's ubiquitous nature, the film itself covers vast territories. Leaping from sweatshops in Guatemala to farmer movements in India, abandoned factories in the Steel Belt to glittering skyscrapers in New York, pastures of sick, hormone-injected livestock to oceans and rivers polluted by corporate waste, the film is brutally aware of the interrelatedness of global forces.

Its indictment of capitalism briefly places the emergence of capitalist culture and a consumer-based society alongside the rise of fascism. But a more consistent analysis of capitalism as a tool of power and authority would have been far more effective.

Herein lies the film's principal fault: it spends much of its time and energy laying out numerous dots, but leaves the effort of connecting them to the individual viewer. The cinematic result is a film that is



WHO IS THIS AMERICA?

Antibalas Afrobeat Orchestra

It's hardly a coincidence that Antibalas has dropped its most recent groove-bomb just as the Republicrats are getting ready for their conventions. The latest from the Bakunin-admiring, Bushwick-based one-world collective may sound good on the dance floor, but it sounds better in the streets. From the first song to the last, "Who is This America?" boasts enough feverish beats, spirited choruses and horn fanfares to make the most timid activist want to rush the barricades.

Antibalas Afrobeat Orchestra emerged in the late nineties out of the ferment

that produced Seattle and Genoa, spraying around multilingual polyrhythms and declaring Albright and Clinton war criminals. Five years later their sound has finally matured, remaining rooted in the ferociously funky afro-beat of Fela Kuti, but introducing Latin beats, synth-bass and even strings to the mixture to concoct a richly textured brew all their own.

Antibalas' radical politics are not grafted onto the music but emerge organically from the rich soil of the intertwined instrumentals. As the first track, "Who is This America Dem Speak of Today?" winds back on itself three times, percussionist/vocalist Duke Amayo's voice becomes righteousness incarnate. "CIA, IRS, DEA, NBC, CNN, FCC, NRA, FBI, INS (SPLIT TO THREE), ATT, ATF, EPA, FCC, NFL, NFC, NBA, WB, PBR, HMO, HUD, AAA, TSA, ERA, PTA," he chants, and the beat alone makes a connection that would take a dissertation to write.

Emma Goldman rather famously said that if "I can't dance, I don't want to be in your revolution." As long as Antibalas is around, that won't be a problem.

—Matt Wasserman

awkwardly paced and fragmented.

The Corporation attempts to offer ways of resisting corporate power, highlighting the successful people's movement in Cochacamba, Bolivia, that reclaimed the city's water from privatization schemes by its government and foreign companies. But, other than a vague affirmation of people power, the film seems to believe that the only way of dealing with corporations is from within "the system" — Michael Moore's documentaries, as he himself gleefully suggests, are supposedly examples of such resistance.

To its credit, the film does assemble a persuasive array of damning evidence against an entire history of corporate power and exploitation. But ironically, the weight of this burden bogs the film down. It meekly issues a call for change, but more effectively reinforces the inescapable feeling of being oppressed.

—Isbaan Tharoor

THE SOCIALISM OF FOOLS

THE POLITICS OF ANTI-SEMITISM,
EDS. ALEXANDER COCKBURN
& JEFFREY ST. CLAIRE

As permanent war spreads across the Middle East, opposition to Zionism and the blitzkrieg bop of the Sharon regime has come in for some heavy treatment from the likes of Abraham Foxman's Anti-Defamation League. When any criticism of the racist reality of Israel is deemed hatred of Jews, couldn't it be reasonably argued that this equates Jewishness with the crimes of one state that acts in the name of all Jews? Wouldn't crying wolf about anti-Semitism to justify Israeli war crimes promote actual hatred of Jews?

It seemed fair to hope that *CounterPunch.org's* editorial tag-team of Alexander Cockburn and

Jeffrey St. Clair would tackle this with verve and relish. Instead, they opted to do something else.

The basic argument of the collection is self-contradictory and intoxicated by its own provocation. Despite constant flashes of lucidity, the sum of the essays argues that anti-Semitism doesn't exist; even if it did, it would pale beside the crimes of Israel; if anti-Zionism is anti-Semitism, then "anti-Semitism" is an ethical duty; Jews are privileged and narcissistic; anti-Semitism isn't a danger even if it does exist because, wink-wink, the "Jewish Lobby" controls the American government and media. In other words, anti-Semitism doesn't matter and, according to a couple of the contributors, would be alright even if it did.

Two essays; by George Sunder-land, and Kathy and Bill Christison; intentionally promote classical anti-Semitic notions of Jewish domination and manipulation updates as a critique of the "Neocons," while a third by Kurt Nimmo defends Amiri Baraka's willfully dumb-ass claim that "4,000 Israelis" had advance knowledge of the World Trade Center bombing and stayed home.

Most of the book is great, just like most of Amiri Baraka's poem "Who Blew Up America" was great. But who wants to drink a cocktail that's 80% lemonade and 20% pure horseshit?

A few excellent essays by Edward Said, Uri Avnery and several American Jews and Israelis who are tired of the politics of fear standing in for reasoned debate about the problem of Zionism could almost redeem the collection.

Instead, they serve as inoculation against claims that the collection itself is anti-Semitic. What's most distressing is that this is exactly the point. The Politics of Anti-Semitism puts straight-up anti-Semitic articles side-by-side with sharp analysis about the uses of the anti-Semitism charge and ends up muddying the waters exactly where clarity is needed.

As has been his habit, Cockburn is too easily satisfied pissing on the pieties of coastal liberals. His own piece, sarcastically titled "My Life As an 'Anti-Semite'" delivers on the promise of the book. He nails the abuse of the term without sacrificing nuance or humor. If only the rest of the collection kept it up.

Zionism has been a fiasco for Jews and a horror for Palestinian Arabs. It is the belief that European Jews can only find a solution to persecution by adopting fascist ideas of the nation and colonial forms of rule (in concert with one or another imperial power) by set-

ting the land of another people in historic Palestine. Israel is the most dangerous place in the world to be a Jew and has perverted the character of the people who bought into its myths. Instead of solving the problem of ethnic difference in the European nation-state, Zionism has globalized it.

The vast majority of organized socialists and anarchists reject anti-

Semitism in form and content. Instead, it is that by singling out Jews within the United States, and Israel internationally, the actual power dynamics of capitalism and imperialism are avoided while the cardinal sin of ethnic incitement is ignored at best, fostered at worst. This is why anti-Semitism has long been tagged the "socialism of fools."

—*Jer Brandt*

LOVING LIBRARIES: LIFE IN THE CITY STACKS

I love books. Newspapers and periodicals. Print. I dislike and distrust the electronic media, particularly television, which in its presentation of news and information is quick off the mark, prone to inaccuracy and notoriously superficial.

TV news goes by too fast to check. The contents of a book, however, can be verified against other books, magazines and the files of daily papers.

I hang out in libraries. Over the years, with the assistance of the librarian behind the desk, I have come to know a number of the great libraries — the main branch of the New York Public Library, the Columbia University libraries (Butler and its two dozen satellite libraries, most on the same campus), and the Dag Hammarskjold library at the United Nations. They are institutions with collections of astonishing depth.

It took me about 15 years to learn what the resources of a great library include and how to use them. I started off as might be expected for a newspaperman, with the bound volumes and then the microfilm records of *The New York Times* and other New York papers.

Then, as I needed to, I proceeded to encyclopedias, yearbooks, almanacs, Facts on File, Keesing's Contemporary Archives, government publications, reports, documents, *The Statistical Abstract of the United States*, biographical dictionaries, *Current Biography*, maps and atlases, indexes to magazines, newspapers and books, book reviews, *Book Review Digest*, bibliographies, databases, and illustrations in the Mid-Manhattan public library's picture collection or the files of Associated Press *Wide World*.

I informed myself about new books, utilizing, for example, *Publishers Weekly*. I dispensed with the *Times'* book section, which I came to think of as mediocre in quality and middle-class in taste.

I became a devotee of the library at the American Antiquarian Society in Worcester, Massachusetts which has the largest collection of early American newspapers in exis-

tence and where I held in my hand copies of John Peter Zenger's *New York Weekly Journal*. Zenger's acquittal in his 1735 trial for printing false and seditious writing went a long way toward establishing freedom of the press in America.

The library provided me with an education, knowledge and insight that far exceeded what I had picked up as an undergraduate and graduate student. Over a long period of time, I gained the ability to brief myself on a subject in about three hours, using the resources immediately available in a great library. I became able to understand difficult texts from Stephane Mallarme to medical literature, to deal with complexity and its meanings and ultimately with the issue of perception.

Many libraries are one-of-a-kind, like the New York Society Library at 53 East 79th St., the oldest library in New York City, founded in 1754. It is a subscription library, housing more than 200,000 volumes on open shelves available for borrowing. It is a quiet haven for readers, writers and editors, researchers, students, children. Its children's room is one of the most peaceful places I know.

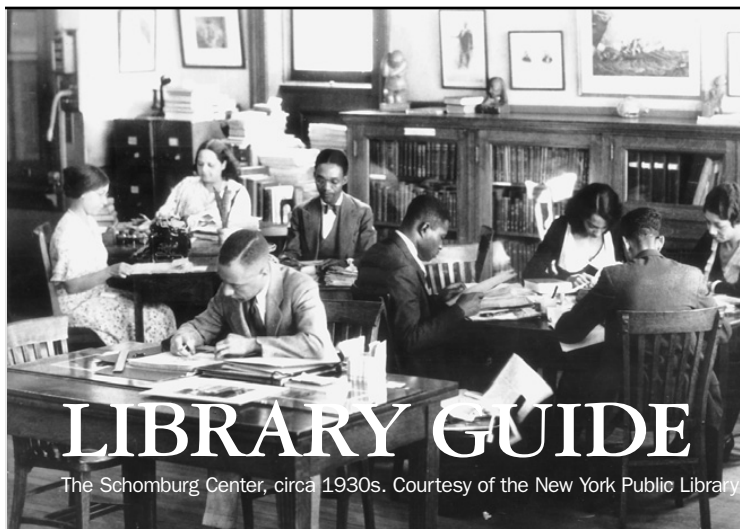
From 1784 to 1789, it served as the first Library of Congress. In 1843, Ralph Waldo Emerson gave a series of lectures at the library attended by Walt Whitman. Herman Melville borrowed William Scoresby's *An Account of the Arctic Regions with a History and Description of the Northern Whale-Fishery* as a source for *Moby Dick*; Melville checked out the copy of Scoresby on Apr. 29, 1850, and only returned it 13 and a half months later.

Today, the library and the librarian upholds the tradition of the book.

I think that almost everything is to be found in the library — questions and answers, worlds of refinement, rarified and refreshing atmospheres, the poetry and drama of life, enduring forever from the clay tablet to manuscript to the book.

The rest of it can be discovered up the street at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

—*Donald Paneth*



NEW YORK PUBLIC LIBRARY

42nd St. and Fifth Ave.; general information (212) 930-0800, general research division, room 315 (212) 930-0830.

The way to get to know its vast resources is to use them. A new regulation requires an access card; the card is easy to get and there is no reason to hang back from using this library because of the requirement. The librarians in room 315 are excellent; they take their time, and help guide each person to the material being sought. Books abound. The research divisions include art and architecture; current periodicals; Jewish; U.S. history; Berg manuscript collection; prints and photographs. There is a lot of electronic information and numerous databases.

MID-MANHATTAN LIBRARY

455 Fifth Ave. at intersection with 40th St. (212) 340-0833.

A block away from the main branch, Mid-Manhattan can be consulted in conjunction with the latter; in fact, that is a good way to work it. The set-up at Mid-Manhattan is simpler, but all sorts of material are available there. Art, a picture collection which circulates; a popular library; health and job information centers; history and social sciences; literature and languages. Good basic reference works, including encyclopedias, Facts on file, and Current Biography.

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20 West 53rd St. (212) 621-0618

Donnell aims a lot of its activities at young people. But the important thing about it is that it is open on Sunday from 1 to 5 p.m., the only public library branch that is.

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THE UNITED NATIONS DAG HAMMARSKJOLD LIBRARY

This library is restricted to qualified researchers — in some cases, students are asked to address requests to Phyllis Dickstein, head librarian, whose telephone number is (212) 963-7443.